CORROSIVE CONSCIOUSNESS



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Enemy Combatant Publications
2017

artwork by Hunter Hancock

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This piece is an attempt at collecting and refining ideas I have thought about and discussed, perhaps excessively, for the past few years on the podcasts Free Radical Radio *and* The Brilliant, *presented here in a redigested and regurgitated form that I envision, tentatively, as my final statements on the subject matter.*

An undue portion of my efforts in anarchist media have involved exchanges with two of the more outspoken US-based exponents of Green Anarchism/Anarcho-Primitivism, John Zerzan and Kevin Tucker. The majority of these exchanges have been mutually critical, if not overtly hostile, and only some of them, I imagine, have been coherent and interesting for others, due to their being marred by repetition and seemingly mutual incomprehension. The possibilities for beneficial exchange seemingly exhausted, my move here is for a conclusion.

Regarding the genesis of this piece in particular, I was contacted by Tucker in late 2014, when exchange still seemed fruitful, and asked by him to submit a piece to his journal Black And Green Review that would serve as the opening of a debate between the two of us over our differences in a theory of anti-civilization anarchism. To my surprise, the piece was summarily rejected as a "non-starter" because it included criticisms of Tucker's work when his under-articulated expectation was that I would present a purely positive case for him to attack - a strange framing for the potential debate, in my view. A heavily revised version of the piece was published in the third issue of the green anarchist newspaper Black Seed, but only in a highly attenuated form - due to length restrictions inherent in the newspaper format - that I found dissatisfying. When I became involved as an editor of Enemy Combatant Publications, it was suggested by the other editors that I revise the piece, hence the present incarnation.

Critique, in my view, is always implicitly complimen-

tary: its mere existence validates the importance of its target, regardless of how harsh it may be. As someone who fell in love with the nonhuman world as a child and found the human one nauseous, Anarcho-Primitivism drew me to anarchism in a way that the Humanistic Left-wing or Right-wing versions never could have, and so I've lavished it with a good deal of this praise. Barring a sea change in the discourse with the Anarcho-Primitivists, what follows is a sincerely fond farewell.

Introduction

Many radicals born and raised in Western Culture[1] consider themselves, at least in part, enemies of that culture: they reject and resist its Capitalism, State-forms, commodity fetishism, religions, and so forth - even as they typically implicitly or explicitly affirm its other dimensions: Humanism, industry, and mass society, among others.

But some of the most interesting radicals of the West push their lived and communicated critique much further, attacking and eschewing the very foundations of Western thought: Rationalism, Humanism, techno-utopianism, and even such universals of civilization itself, Western or not, as agriculture and urbanism. These anti-civilization radicals correctly recognize that it is these most fundamental, chronically-underexamined aspects of our everyday ways of thinking and doing that lie at the heart of our crisis, the everyday lived crisis of mass slavery, ecocide, and self-alienation.[2]

Unfortunately, and perhaps ironically, some of the anti-civilization anarchists most visible in anarchist media, in spite of their regularly voiced - and, to take them in good faith, no doubt earnestly felt and pursued - opposition to civilization, tend to reproduce the most ancient and consistent themes of the West in their thought and action. In doing so, they cripple their capacity for a genuine exodus from thinking and doing in civilized ways.

Civilization, understood critically, is not a thing, but a process, a lived activity[3]; more a verb than a noun, it is a way of life that each of us who live within it daily reproduce to a greater or lesser degree according to the thoughts, gestures, and communications that compose our moment-to-moment lived experiences, individually and in communion with others. Each day, we pass our lives in sets of reified, civilized relations or sets of nominal, anarchic relations, making our contribution to the world in which we participate. A libera-

tory critique, lived as an insurgent form of life, demands, as much as individually possible, a self-critical rejection of the Western mythos in its entirety along with all other civilized beliefs and values, including the epistemic framework by which beliefs and values are formed and adopted.

So long as our lived and communicated critique involves the same tendency toward self-alienated thoughts and gestures that characterize civilization, we can expect that we will only reproduce our crisis in a new form through the recuperation and sublimation of our rebellion into yet another slave system, another society of strangers and work, just as rebellions have typically done. It is popular now among radicals to say that you can take apart the Master's house with the Master's tools; but the tools have values and modes of motion implied by their structure, and clinging too tightly to them means our hands are likely to reproduce those motions and values.

In this essay, I will critically examine two of the most public figures of the US-based Anarcho-Primitivists[4] - through their individually written essays, editorship in journals, and public statements at events and interviews[5] - as a case in point of this convolutedly and unwittingly civilized mode of purportedly anti-civilization critique. In Part I, we will begin with a necessarily brief examination of the tropes of the Western civilized mythos – self-alienation, dualism, rationalism, optimism, and monotheism – quickly investigating their origins, their functional roles in the civilized way of life, and their consequences in history, culminating in their modern secularization and incorporation into ostensibly radical, but ultimately insufficiently critical, theories. Following that, in Part II, the discussion moves to a point-by-point highlighting of AP's participation in these Western tropes, demonstrating in each case a failure to commit to the deep implications of a truly anti-civilization perspective and instead a stumbling

into a quagmire of incomplete critique, contradiction, and confusion. This section closes by cataloguing a number of scientific inaccuracies and distortions the APs employ when drawing on the findings of biology and anthropology in an effort to give their theory empirical legitimacy. Finally, Part III reviews some of the AP responses to my past criticisms and anticipates how they may respond, or rather might have responded and might still respond, to my critique in Part II. A postcript closes the piece as I turn to my personal suggestions for a truly anti-civilization form of life through some sketches I call Cynical Virtues.

Part I:

That Damned Old *Weltanschauung* That Just Won't Die: The Evolution of Slave Ideology in the West

"Faced with the meaninglessness of the world - the real [...] the individual most often quakes and turns away. The experience of the real is literally unbearable, and philosophy has traditionally come to the rescue to save humanity from meaninglessness, to create the illusion of a truth [...]"

David F. Bell
introduction to *Joyful Cruelty* by Clément Rosset

"We were created not by a supernatural intelligence but by chance and necessity as one species out of millions in Earth's biosphere. Hope and wish for otherwise as we will, there is no evidence of an external grace shining down upon us, no demonstrable destiny or purpose assigned us, no second life vouchsafed us for the end of the present one. We are, it seems, completely alone."

Edward O. Wilson
The Meaning of Human Existence

"I can't say what it is that I feel [...] I can say that I feel something. It's something that I know is real. It's something worth fighting for. [...] The fight, then, now and always, is the rage of the spirit of life and wildness. [...] It is within us, anxiously waiting. It cries for the healing of the spirit (rewilding) and the healing of the body (resistance). [...] Our deepest wound cries for healing. [...] My spirit knows this. My spirit feels this. The spirit of all life knows this. It has always known this. I've only begun to listen."

Kevin Tucker,
"Egocide" *For Wildness and Anarchy*

To Make the World Other: Self-Alienation and the Origins of Our Crisis

"Nothing appears more surprising to those who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few, and the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we enquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find, that, as force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is therefore, on opinion only that government is founded, and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as to the most free and most popular."

David Hume
"Of the First Principles of Government"

"To be sure, to speak of spirit and the good as Plato did meant standing truth on her head and denying perspective itself, the basic condition of all life"

Friedrich Nietzsche
Beyond Good And Evil

Our discussion henceforth will hinge on a distinction between two kinds of theory; as theory is *thea*, "a view", and *horan* "to see"[6], we are talking here of two different *ways of seeing*, two modes of being a creature in the world.

The dominant tendency today begins not from *the real of our lived experience* but instead with a presupposition about *what the world is* really *like*, positing something greater, deeper, or truer than what we feel. Prior to the sensuous flesh of phenomenal life, there is a positing of a transcendental truth - sometimes explicitly asserted, other times only implicit or even unexamined, unrecognized, but, when critically exposed, obviously logically necessary for

the whole theoretical edifice - and it follows from a presupposition like this one that our lived experience is only a pale reflection or echo of what is seen as the fundamental truth.

This way of thinking and being is quintessentially religious, even when it is now commonly called secular. It requires that we treat aspects of our actually-lived existence - which is experienced *preconceptually* as a unity of what we typically call subject and object, perceived and perceiver, organism and habitat - as though they are not part of this unity of life, not agents of transformation in our cocreated world, but instead as though they are alien, as something other than, greater than, separated from, and somehow more real, more permanent, more valuable than ourselves.

Raw phenomenality is fragmented into dualisms and petrified into concepts as we *self-alienate*, creating frozen concepts out of flowing life. Ways of modeling and communicating our ultimately ineffable preconceptual experiences - models that are always necessarily abstract and partial, revealing some aspects of actually-lived reality while they obscure others - come to be treated as somehow *more real* than the lived experience from which they are necessarily always derived. Rather than consciously being recognized as necessarily incomplete and therefore used for strictly practical, playful, or storytelling purposes, the models supplant *the real* of phenomenal life.

It is thusly that one engages in reification[7], creating the mental infrastructure on which the fragmented and confused slave form of existence called civilization is based. This dominant mode of being, having been reimagined and mutated through millennia of human domination such that its specific features change dramatically *even as this core characteristic remains essentially the same*, is therefore very rarely but very rightly called *slave ideology*: a mode of thinking that all successful enslavers need to instill in their slaves to a high degree in order to manufacture the mass submission upon

which all slave systems, past and present, have depended.

Indeed, slavery follows inherently from self-alienation. As we reify, we surrender our self-creative powers in each moment in particular ways, projecting them onto abstractions - our agency is first voluntarily surrendered and then delusionally given to the idea we have invented.

To take just a few common examples, the reification of value into an absolute, universal form denies our power as *valuers who create it in each moment*, individually or cooperatively, in a particularized and personal, nominal and irreducible fashion - we instead surrender ourselves to the dictates of gods, of utility, of rights, of society, or some vague sense of *the right thing to do.* In another ubiquitous case, the many intersecting reifications that compose the modern economy entail the surrender of our agency to provide our own subsistence in what manner and with whom we choose, involving instead identification with the role of the worker and the alienated value of currency and exchange. Believing in property, we have allowed ourselves to be massively and incredibly dispossessed of our habitats and to treat nonhuman organisms as expendable Others and resources rather than as the sentient and communicative creatures they truly are. By identifying both ourselves and others as workers, not only mass personal submission but mass interpersonal policing occurs, as slaves engage in the "mutual acquiescence"[8] of reinforcing one another's learned helplessness with everything from words to routines to physical force.

In every case, the surrender of agency denies the existential reality of our lives, created in each moment by each of us in consanguinity with our habitats and fellow creatures. So deep is the conditioning of self-alienation (now over three hundred generations deep in some cases), and so pervasive the practice of mutual submission, that even those who regularly engage in critique may often, if not consistently vigilant, find themselves falling back into the rigid

patterns of thought and action that characterize our slavery; while many others ignore, deny, or have forgotten altogether that a different way of being is possible.

This other form of theory, perpetually an undercurrent in the history of civilized thought, considers phenomenality, immediately-lived experience, to be prior to and to take precedence over any such reifying speculation. Knowledge and value are embodied in phenomenality, are felt in the flesh, and are always instrumental and provisional rather than aiming at an imagined ultimate, objective reality disembodied from moment-to-moment perspectival existence. Value and knowledge are self-consciously and self-critically seen as necessarily relational, fluid, and ephemeral as they are created individually or in communion with others.

This mode of thought and action, of unified life, refuses self-alienation in each moment. It refuses *abstract belief*, in the most basic sense: in reified, universal value, somehow free-floating with no conscious valuer; in absolute conceptions of metaphysical reality, somehow disembodied from consciousness and imagined from a(n actually-theistic or not) deified perspective; and of epistemic optimism that treats our *abstracted models* of reality as though they are reality itself. It is nominalist, skeptical, instrumental, and sensuous - it recognizes at all times that one is both inseparable from the world and a creator of the world. In doing so, it refuses the confused dualistic and reified slave mode of existence by recognizing that we are always necessarily participants in and co-creators of reality, including when we imagine ourselves to lack such agency - for it is, ironically, only *through* a tortured exercise of our creative powers that we can adopt the beliefs of slave ideology in the first place! This mode is available to each of us at any time through a process of critical self-theory[9], just as the former mode is available to us in each moment we, consciously or not, engage in slave ideology, the reification of theory.

Exactly when and how the reified mode of being took such sweeping and tragic precedence over the self-critical mode is undoubtedly limited to informed speculation at this far remove from the beginnings of civilization. This careful skepticism need not prevent us from considering the available evidence of its origins, however, as in the case of Göbekli Tepe. Briefly, in this earliest-known large, permanent monument, it appears that the (presumably) religious purposes of the structure, which seems to depict images of human supremacy over nonhuman organisms on its surface, predated the practice of agriculture, animal husbandry, social stratification, and other features of civilized ways of life. As there are nearby signs of plant and animal domestication that appear to have relatively closely followed the construction of Göbekli Tepe, we can *tentatively* abduce - make an inference to the best explanation from limited evidence - that the desire to maintain and worship at the temple, as well as adoption of the ideology signified by the temple, were causal in this change in human subsistence and relation to nonhuman organisms. While archaeologist Karl Schmidt may overstate the case when he says "Twenty years ago everyone believed civilization was driven by ecological forces. I think what we are learning is that civilization is a product of the human mind", the present evidence suggesting that human religious monuments predated agriculture and animal husbandry is compelling.[10] Again, we inevitably must speculate as we try to interpret the evidence, but it may indeed be that the tremendous and possibly unprecedented effort of making a large, permanent stone temple reflects a similarly tremendous and possibly unprecedented shift in qualitative experience, of positing value, and of ontology, the very conception of what exists.

In just such a speculative exercise, Jason McQuinn invites us to imagine the origins of such a shift:

"[...] at one time human beings, already living preso-

cially, prerationally [and] pretheoretically and communicating directly but without use of conscious symbols, created the first intentional symbols, became increasingly fluent with them until they began to be used habitually, and eventually wove them into relatively systematic word usages understood by larger and larger communities. Before this development there could be no such things as conceptual creations like gods, spirits, abstract beings like nature, or abstract collective beings like species, societies, classes, nation-states or languages because all of these exist primarily as conceptions whose realities exist only to the extent that they are parasitic on the nonconceptual (actually-living) realm [...] Initially, the temptations of conceptual self-alienation were most likely fleeting [...] But with catastrophe [...] suffering and brooding must have eventually led to the creation of stories of vengeful, vicious, and violent spirits and gods. But still, with good times these stories would always recede [...] Until the big catastrophe hit, and one of the story-tellers insisted that one of the vicious, vengeful, and violent spirits was at work behind it because the spirit was angry with people [...] the story-tellers were now specialists, shamans [...] The relatively fluid roles of kin leadership became more and more solidified in certain powerful figures [...and] occasionally – with the backing of priests – intimidation or even violent force was used by the more powerful to compel some people to work more than others at particular tasks for the gods and the kin-group like monument building or collection of surplus food stores [...] and with the gods' approval, sometimes conflicts with other hostile neighboring groups led to the capture and temporary enslavement of a few non-kin aliens [...]"[11]

And so on, as the foundations of our crisis were lain, step by dreadful step. We can thus see how this incredibly crucial

shift in our mode of being a creature in the world is at the core of our enslaving, ecocidal, civilization-creating way of life. And, as we shall see, the history of Western ideology is in fact a history of the mutations of this basic slave ideology.

Which Side Are You On?: The Origins of Morality and Anthropocentrism in Dualistic Religion

A commonly held attitude among Western radicals is a condemnation of Western ideologues or Western people in general as especially chauvinistic. This belief undoubtedly has merit and a place in any thoroughgoing critical theory when it comes to understanding such phenomena as colonialism; but, by dismissing all claims of Western uniqueness as necessarily *merely* self-aggrandizement, it can obscure the examination necessary to notice that there are some truly distinct aspects of the Western worldview.

Zoroaster may not have been the first person to conceptualize the world as morally torn in two; but he was the first to do so in a way that gained wide purchase, and the religion persists to this day. Friedrich Nietzsche claimed, perhaps hyperbolically but nonetheless meaningfully, that Zoroaster invented Good and Evil - he was no doubt correct that something new had happened in the transformation of slave ideology by civilized ideologues.

Manichaeism - the teachings of another Iranian prophet, Mani, himself possibly Zoroastrian until his own supposedly divine revelation in the second century AD - went further in some respects, linking a moral dualism of good and evil to an ontological dualism of spirit and matter. According to Mani - due to the interference of the profane demons of the King of Darkness with the creation of a spiritual world of light by the Father of Greatness, an all-good, singular deity - the world in which we live is a tainted place,

corrupted by dark forces from its prior perfection. Most humans live in ignorance, passing their sad lives without understanding of how far we have fallen. History is the process through which the spiritual light is withdrawn from its fallen state of admixture with dark matter and recombined to a perfected, heavenly state. Morality is the process through which humans, as part of the cosmic battlefield, become enlightened and choose to be on the side of the Good. Interestingly, Manichaeans, unlike Zoroastrians, did not see the victory of light over darkness as inevitable - also unlike Zoroastrians, their religion perished, but not before a run in which it was one of the world's most widespread and successful slave ideologies.

The ancient dualists brought profound changes to the landscape of human experience. For them, and for their witting or unwitting adherents thereafter, values are not social conventions adopted by groups for internal stability, and still less are they liberatorily recognized as the products of an individual's self-critical process - instead, they are *Absolutes*, things-in-themselves written into the fabric of existence by greater-than-human forces. They stand apart from the world and above it, perfect and unmoving amidst the inferior becoming-and-passing-away of the mortal world. For the dualists, the world as we find it is a fallen world, having declined from a state of original union and perfection, and/or it is locked in a violent, antipodal process such that half of it is to be rejected as unnatural and unworthy. Either way, life as it is actually lived is necessarily blighted and can only be changed through a cosmic redemption that, depending on the faith, may or may not come.

Finally, the dualists' imputing of free will[12] and divine revelation to humans introduced a peculiar kind of anthropocentrism. For them, the human is uniquely positioned to understand the world; accordingly, it has unique powers and responsibilities. Unlike other creatures, which

make their motions and live their lives in an ignorant and unalienated relationship with the world as it is, as inseparable from it as their own body parts are from their whole organism – or even as blind and dumb automata – the human is in a position to choose to be with the Good of the world or against it, to choose its alienation or union.

The human is thus reified as the *causa sui*, the cosmic mover-and-shaker, anointed with the god-like power to shape the world *not as one creative agent inextricably linked among the many*, but as the one who, according to their acceptance or rejection of divine wisdom, *will take up sides with Good or Evil and decide the redemption or fall of the world.* Despite being superficially presented as free, the human has been enormously bound - robbed of the ability to create value, reduced to a pawn of greater-than-human forces, the multifarious avenues of life reduced to two. The dualistic religions were thus the first major enclosure of the inner world.

Unum, Bonum, Verum: Rationalism and Optimism in Ancient Greece

The beginnings of Western secular philosophy are typically placed at the teachings of the Athenian philosopher Socrates and his student and portrayer, Plato. They are by far the most well-known Classical Greek philosophers, and their thought remains core reading in Western scholarship to this day.[13]

Nearly everything known about Socrates comes from his students Plato and Xenophon, as he left no writings himself, and much of that consists of presumably at least partially fictionalized dialogues between Socrates and other characters. With his eponymous Socratic Irony and Method, Socrates typically feigns ignorance and naïveté on the subjects in which he engages with his confident interlocutors, asking them a series of increasingly penetrating questions that eventually undermine their beliefs, revealing simultaneously to their surprise Socrates' hidden wisdom

and that the beliefs they had confidently held and espoused were founded on poor reasoning and hidden assumptions. This form of pedagogy has become iconically Western.

Undergirding Socrates' ostensibly highly rational, critical, and secular methods was an essential optimism about human nature and capacity. He famously asserted that virtue and reason were sufficient in themselves for a good quality of life and that all unjust behavior is merely a result of ignorance.[14] For Socrates, this was axiomatic: a person who *knows* what is just will always *do* what is just; and to *do* what is just is to live a good life.

Coupled with his dialogical pedagogy, we have a perfect recipe for an optimistic faith. If humans are inherently capable of and driven by reason, will do the Good once they know it, and can learn of the just through philosophical inquiry, then humanity will tend inexorably toward the Good. All that we need is time, energy, dialogue, and – as is usually unacknowledged – faith in and the maintenance of the *status quo* of society. We are here not at all far removed from the modern political and civilizational reformist tenet, *The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.* Another piece of slave ideology was lain.

Thus, though Socrates is now an icon of Rationalism, scrutiny shows him to be a man of faith. Perhaps we can best and most critically understand him as the poster child for the hidden faith inherent in Rationalist doctrine. Indeed, less well-known about Socrates is that he believed himself to be a divinely-appointed messenger, claimed to receive instruction from a supernatural voice in his head, and ardently held the belief that divinity had arranged all worldly affairs for the best.

His student, Plato, was even more tremendously influential, having his mark on almost every aspect of modern Western thought. What concerns us here, though, is only his epistemology and value theory, both parts of his

Theory of Forms.

Plato believed the world as we experience it is only apparent, not real - it is a pale reflection of a truer, eternal world in which what we think of as ideas and concepts are incarnated as *Absolutes*: things-in-themselves, with an eternal, uncaused, unchanging existence rather than a relational, temporal, contingent, and fluid existence. Thus, for instance, Love, the Number Three, and Justice *really exist in themselves* as Forms and are instantiated as imperfect, partial manifestations in each particular case on the material realm. We of course have here another perfect basis of slave ideology, as well as a prefiguration of Christian Heaven.

Plato dismissed the knowledge of the senses as always necessarily mere opinion: owing to the unstable nature of the world as we perceive it, sensory knowledge must likewise be unstable. Wedded to a hypostatized vision of the world, Plato held that true knowledge was not unstable and subjective, but eternal and objective: it came through knowledge of the Forms, which was imparted by a heavenly intuition accessible through introspection and reason. Just as the master imparted measured reason over his unruly and emotional slave, an instinctive and sensuous mode of living must be restrained by the faculty of reason - indeed, Plato refers several times in *Republic* to enslaving one's own desires.

Plato's Allegory of the Cave illustrated this theory. He imagined a group of persons who had lived their entire lives chained inside a cave, with the Sun behind them, facing a wall that was the only thing they had ever seen. Each day, the prisoners saw shadows on the wall in front of them cast by things passing the cave's entrance; knowing nothing else, the prisoners believed that these shadows were the entirety of reality and had no desire to leave their situation. Here, of course, the shadows are the sensory world, while the world outside is that of the Forms. The philosopher is one who has escaped the chains and turned around to realize he has only

known pale imitations of the truth, and the philosopher's duty is to help the others, still chained, to see. Plato held in the highest esteem what philosophy and the philosopher were and could be. Indeed, he envisioned a utopian city-state, the Kallipolis, that was justly ruled by an absolute monarch - a philosopher-king, a true lover of wisdom - thus lending his approval to an enlightened despotism characterized by secretive social engineering and eugenics.

The ideas of Socrates and Plato that I have highlighted here may strike the reader as eccentric and anachronistic, having little to do with Western thought in general, much less our modern plight and contemporary radical responses to it. Indeed, Socrates and Plato may have been fairly marginal figures in their own time - Socrates was supposedly executed for his teachings, and Plato's inspiration for the Theory of Forms may have come from intoxication by an ergot-infested, barley-based beverage that he imbibed through his participation in a mystery cult. Classical Greek intellectual culture was diverse in its heyday and diverse in its influential legacy.

Moreover, though now far more well-known than any of them, Socrates and Plato's ideas were a radical departure from many of their predecessors or contemporaries. Some of the pre-Socratics, like Heraclitus, saw the world as consisting of a ceaseless, aimless process of becoming-and-passing-away, lacking either an essential order in itself, a destiny for human beings, or a tendency toward a universal Good. The Sophists argued social values were mere conventions, human vanities rather than Absolutes, and seriously doubted the capacity of the human mind to understand the fundamental nature of reality. The Cynics detested and critiqued civilization almost in its entirety, with the famous Cynic Diogenes reputedly mocking and harassing Plato personally. The Stoics and Epicureans saw the hardships of human life as irredeemable, not susceptible to ameliora-

tion by either an essential force of Good or through human artifice or accumulation of knowledge.

If Plato's Theory of the Forms seems insane, that is probably partially because it is. But it is important to recognize not only that Plato's theory was meant seriously to address fundamental philosophical problems tied directly to slave ideology[15], but also that it remains covertly incredibly influential today. Nietzsche famously quipped of his time period that Christianity was "Platonism for the masses"[16], and we can add to that, as we will see later in this discussion, that post-monotheist secularization is Christianity for the postmodern masses. Plato's true legacy was and is a very formal and resilient iteration of slave ideology, a not-quite-theistic idea of *transcendental Absolutes*: entities that lay outside of direct human experience, yet are knowable through intuition and faith; entities that depended on and were caused by nothing, but which influenced everything; entities that were like nothing living and sensual, but existed in an eternal and ultimate way.

Thus, what Plato postulated was a formal, partially secularized justification for reification - in this way alone, his influence has been enormous and has never abated. His legacy is the dominant, reifying mode of thought alluded to above, essential for every religion and political ideology, every philosophy of slavery. Indeed, the irony of a modern reader finding Plato's Forms bizarre is that his slave ideology was one of the more lucid and honest in that it recognized the supernaturalness and strangeness inherent in reification and tried to account for it, whereas modern slave ideologies tend to portray reification as either something automatic and to be taken for granted or something that is not occurring at all.

The numerous philosophers and theologians Plato influenced – Christian, Muslim, and secularist alike – refined and mutated Plato's slave ideology through their debates on the nature, number, and taxonomy of Forms. St. Thomas

Aquinas thought the highest transcendentals were *Unum*, *Bonum*, and *Verum*: the One, the unified origin of reality; the Good, the measure of all value; and the True, the faculty of real knowledge - and of course all were incarnated by God.

The Truth Revealed: Monotheism and the Human

> *"[...] the development of the great world religions entailed a collapse of the cosmological monism of both primitive and archaic religions. The world was no longer seen as a single cosmos in which men and gods participated in sacred and profane fields, but rather as two sharply polarized cosmos – one centered in the present world, the other on the life hereafter. The major ethical implications of this cosmological dualism were, on the one hand, rejection of the present world as evil and man as inherently unworthy, and on the other hand emergence of the idea of salvation as the central religious preoccupation. Ritual and sacrifice [...] were no longer directed so much at fulfilling obligations to the gods by establishing harmony with the cosmos, but at the primary goal of salvation, that of saving man from his original evil and sinfulness [...]"*
>
> Orlando Patterson
> *Slavery and Social Death*

The final contributor to the uniqueness of the Western brand of the civilized worldview is monotheism, the mutation and popularization of the Forms. As Patterson touches on above, the transition from a monistic, pantheistic/animistic worldview to a dualistic, monotheistic one is immense in its consequences. Not only was the transformation in value theory outlined above refined, but the slave ideology gained a newfound universalism and distinctive kind of temporal delusion.

Again, truth and value transitioned from being nominal, particular, and diffuse to being reified, univer-

sal, and concentrated. From being something that was the province and power of each being, co-created and shared through intersubjective events, they came to be isolated and concentrated in distant, absolute centers that were or are accessible only through priests, experts, or even no persons at all. This occurred stepwise in the West, from the pantheism or animism of the uncivilized, to the polytheism of the Greeks and early Romans, and finally to the full concentration of a singular deity from the revelations of Abraham.[17] In this way, monotheism was an extension of the Platonism that preceded and repeatedly pollinated it, as theologians periodically rediscovered and reinterpreted Plato's writings.

Unlike Zoroastrianism and Manichaeism, in which the good deities were powerful *but not* omnipotent, the Abrahamic deities were fully empowered, resulting in all manner of hand-waving theological contortions to explain the problem of evil, the contradiction inherent in a divine plan and individual free will, and so on - we can understand this as an intensification of slave ideology: as authority becomes increasingly entrenched and internalized, the reification correspondingly must become more absurd and delusional. In an oft-referenced scene of the Old Testament, when Moses receives his prophecy and asks his deity how to refer to him, the reply from Yahweh is, "I AM THAT I AM [...] Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."[18] "I am" is derived from the old Hebrew word *hawa*, meaning "to be", and *y-hawa* or *yahweh* is the proper imperfect conjugation of that verb - revealingly, Yahweh thus literally means *Being* or *He Is*.[19] The fluid and ephemeral multiplicity of the living world has collapsed into the fixed and eternal singularity of the theological Other: not becoming-and-passing-away, but Being; not we are, but He Is.

A corollary of objective, absolute value and truth is its universalism. It is a small leap from a belief of such a truth to its prescriptivity – the revelations of divinity ought

to be spread, whether by persuasion or force. Judaism has often been vilified as inherently chauvinistic or xenophobic for its scripture anointing a chosen people, but a virtue of such a worldview is the recognition that one's values are not necessarily interesting to others. Christianity and Islam have inspired a much more zealous approach, with adherents spreading the good word through bloody and tortured centuries of evangelism, commerce, enslavement, and war.

More complex and subtle a change in worldview, but no less profound, was that of a transition from a sense of time as cyclical and aimless to one that is linear and teleological. Intimacy with one's habitat and the fellow creatures that constitute it suggests the former: bodies and consciousness pass from one form to another in a ceaseless cycle of becoming-and-passing-away. But the monstrous abstraction of the immortal and unchanging Yahweh/Jehovah/Allah and the sundering of the world into dualisms suggests the latter.

There is no trace of a linear perspective of time in any animist worldview of indigenous peoples, some of whom do not even have certain time-based verbal conjugations. Perhaps surprisingly, even many of the civilized have not or did not view human history as ultimately linear and teleological. The adventurous and authoritarian metaphysics of Plato, of the Ramayana, of the Florentine Codex, or of Confucius did not cause the classical Greek, Indian, Aztec, or Chinese civilizations to abandon the cyclical view of time. Even as they measured time numerically, these measures were not understood as, fundamentally, *going* or *leading* somewhere. Rather, time was still simply becoming-and-passing-away: the seasons change, empires rise and fall, creatures die and are born anew, and bad and good times come and go. But the revealed religion of monotheism changed that by giving humanity, for the first time, a history and destiny revealed through the absolute truth of a singular, omnipotent deity.[20]

It is assuredly in the work of Saint Augustine, if not

perhaps earlier in the Old Testament, that there is a clear sense of time as an absolute thread moving through the universe, or along which the universe moves, not tied as a mere instrumental measure to the motions of physical bodies. Instead, time is the dimension through which a grand narrative of humanity occurs. Driven out of the prehistory of Eden, humanity is expelled from timeless paradise *into* linear time through the punishment of Original Sin. In the mundane and human world, evil is perennial and ineradicable and the human prone to sinfulness, as Augustine clearly distinguishes between the possibilities of the earthly city and the heavenly city. Through the incarnation and suffering of Christ, there is the possibility of redemption, with its deliverance being, variously, already inherent in his sacrifice, attainable through a human-engineered or divinely-delivered apocalypse, or realized through immortal souls reuniting with Jehovah in death.

This tripartite narrative – an original tranquil wholeness, a fall into a tainted and fractured loss, and a redemption through reunification – would prove itself both sufficiently mutable to be taken up again and again by persons promulgating otherwise very different slave ideologies (including revolutionary ideologies) as well as sufficiently resilient to never lose its core structure.

Joachim of Flora, a 12th-century radical Christian, prophesized a coming "Third Age" of universal brotherhood and peace to complete the redemption process, inspiring messianic Christian movements around Europe. Hegel's three dialectics of consciousness, liberty, and civilized progress all feature a three-stage pattern of an entity first existing in uninterrupted oneness, then fracturing through conflict, and finally realizing itself through resolution of that conflict – indeed, his basic metaphysics of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis could not be more explicit in this regard. Karl Marx, a true Hegelian, posited a primitive communism that was

shattered by the advent of private property, leading us to our present capitalist world, one that will be violently overthrown and replaced by a communism that is both an advent and a homecoming, a redemption. In laying out his lunatic utopian vision of Positivism, Auguste Comte divided human history into being defined first by a religious worldview, then by a metaphysical one of secular philosophy, and thirdly by an anticipated scientific one that would revive the spirit of religiosity through a one-world scientific-humanist church. Again and again, the teleological tripartite worldview appears.

Thus, for the first time, slave ideologies were ornamented with a conception of collective human history that had an objective, transcendental meaning. Whereas other creatures' lives perhaps had and have meaning through the qualities felt by the individual and through those shared with the other creatures with whom they coparticipate and cocreate ecosystems (unless they are dismissed outright, as was often the case, as mindless automata), nonhumans were incapable of linear, multigenerational change and thus incapable of either tragedy or absolution. But humans, reified as Humanity, have a multigenerational, cosmological height, fall, and resurgence that is uniquely theirs. *History was now a story that was something other than what anyone actually lived.* The world is the stage on which Humanity acts.

As the protagonist, made in the image of the Creator, the world is essentially scrutable to humans. It is *for* humans. It is ordered and purposive, reflecting the organized and purposeful mind of the human who can understand it and the deity who created both – it has meaning and measure, and, in being acted upon and understood, the world, and the protagonist who inhabits it, will be justified, redeemed, and affirmed.[21] Anthropocentrism is further fortified in the Western mythos.

"We are a way for the Cosmos to know itself": The False Disillusionment of Secular Humanism

"What were the advantages of the Christian moral hypothesis? 1. It granted man an absolute value, as opposed to his smallness and accidental occurrence in the flux of becoming and passing away [...]"

Friedrich Nietzsche
The Will to Power

"The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena. Thus people today stop at the laws of nature, treating them as something inviolable, just as God and Fate were treated in past ages. And in fact both are right and both wrong: though the view of the ancients is clearer insofar as they have a clear and acknowledged terminus, while the modern system tries to make it look as if everything were explained."

Ludwig Wittgenstein
Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

A great many people in the West today, from the various semi-radical, more-or-less reformist tendencies of the Left to the techno-positivists and transhumanists – bound together by their proudly avowed secularism – lament and indict the persistent religiosity of much of the West. Many of these lamenters miss the mark because they narrowly understand religiosity in terms of theism, as the ontological belief in gods. Undoubtedly, Christianity remains a powerful slave ideology in the United States, and there is no reason to think that will change anytime soon.[22] But what is most insidious about monotheism is not its tenacity, but its mutability – it is the way that its core belief structure can remain intact even without the element of an Abrahamic deity. This newer set of slave ideologies - whose exponents unconsciously reca-

pitulate monotheist themes - might appropriately be called post-monotheism.[23] I referenced above the secularization of the Christian tripartite narrative of human destiny in Hegel, Marx, and others, but it has other dimensions.

One of these is the moral notion of *ameliorism*, the belief that human society is improving, has improved, and will continue to improve morally and socially due to an accumulation of knowledge and an innate collective human tendency toward justice. A hybrid of Socrates' rational optimism and monotheism's reified Good, it is one of the dominant modern faiths – enormous numbers of people, secular and religious alike, in the modern West subscribe to some version of this belief: that things in civilization are improving or could improve, or at least that they are better now than in much of the past. In a fancy bit of ideological legerdemain, slaves have been led to believe the best way to become free is to stay in the slave society and either be patient or take an active role in slave management. Misleadingly and flimsily presented as commonsensical and demonstrable (e.g., through the advent and spread of democratic republicanism, the legal expansion of civil rights, or the infiltration of politically correct speech and mores in popular media), it is only a linearized and truncated version of the familiar teleology - rather than a fall and abrupt redemption, it is a slow but steady climb out of the darkness and into the light.[24]

Many of our secular believers in social justice might be surprised to learn that less than two centuries ago, this doctrine of progress emerged as a *self-consciously religious belief*: theologians and reformers believed that Jehovah was gradually revealing his beneficent plan as humanity progressed intellectually and morally to a level sufficient to understand it. Thus, the Old Testament espoused a more vengeful, punitive form of morality, while the New Testament advised gentleness and forgiveness.25 This ameliorist doctrine gave spiritual balm to the American and British

abolitionists of African chattel slavery, just as the secular one does the same for our social justice activists; but the former were more lucid in their recognition of needing a divine ordering principle to underpin such a belief.

Post-monotheism's inheritance of universalism is manifest in scientific realism: an epistemological and metaphysical bundle of beliefs asserting, roughly, that we have good reasons to believe that our best scientific theories correspond at least fairly well to the truth of a mind-independent material reality; that we also have good reasons for thinking they will, given sufficient time and resources, continue to become more accurate; and, thirdly, that the not-humanly-sensible entities posited in our models (be they anything from proteins to the Higgs Boson) are not simply instrumental abstractions but really-existing things-in-themselves. A great many people today adhere to some more-or-less-coherent version of this worldview, however consciously, and also think of themselves as secular. Like their forebears, many of these believers think the world would be a better place if more people accepted their metaphysic (*Those silly Christians - they don't even believe in evolution!*), and they may thus be motivated to evangelize.

But contrary to revisionist accounts that portray the scientific revolution as a rebellious eruption of reason and secularism against superstition and religion, the Enlightenment figures lionized as the founders of the scientific worldview were themselves believers in Christianity or Islam, magick, and numerology. Indeed, a core ideological tenet of the early scientific worldview was the belief that the fundamental nature of the world must be understandable to human beings because the world was essentially orderly through the divine will of Jehovah or Allah, and the minds of human beings divinely reflected that order and could ascertain it through the godly gift of reason. Later, this conviction mutated, for some of the more vehement secularists,

into a view of a rational order of Nature that was progressive and hierarchical - God was removed from the picture, but a systematically ordered universe, a kind of depersonified God, reflecting certain human dispositions and beliefs, supplanted it. The human realization of the universe, and thus the Universe becoming conscious and comprehending of itself, was a part of the teleological unfolding of Nature toward greater complexity and sophistication.

Many of our modern, proud atheists blanch at the idea of a teleological universe, likely viewing it as covertly religious for reasons similar to the ones I suggest; but many nonetheless maintain that the world is essentially, fundamentally knowable to human beings, in spite of having removed, like the ameliorists, the metaphysical basis for this article of faith. There is something special about the human that allows it to know the world, but the specialty is undefined. It is thus that that iconic popularizer of science Carl Sagan can say of human beings, with all the pomp of a Humanist mystic, that "We are a way for the Cosmos to know itself" - as though no other creature were in a sentient relation with its world.

If the scientific image of the human being is at least fairly accurate, it suggests that we are organisms who developed our sensory and reasoning capacities in response to environmental pressures – our capacities are thus geared toward mere survival and reproduction, not true enlightenment. It may even be that a propensity for delusion and self-deception is adaptive, as it allows one to be more skilled at lying to others by half-believing one's own lies, to live in conditions of despair while drawing succor from absurd hopes, and to reproduce when a sober analysis would reveal the cruelty being done to one's children.

From a truly atheistic and Darwinian perspective, there is no reason to think that a human is categorically more capable of understanding reality than other creatures, who lack some of our sensory capacities just as we lack

some of theirs. No one asserts *I believe that the world has a fundamental order that the bonobo ape can know...that the amoeba can know...that the ant can know...that the banyan tree can know...* yet so many will venture the same for the human, precisely because they, consciously or not, adhere to something like Aristotle's Great Chain of Being in a secular form. Here, a reified Science has become the theological Other, revealing truth and providing existential value: our secularists are still believers in a world that is, at base, *for Humanity*, believers in a teleological history of the world being steadily unveiled for them. The ideology of anthropocentrism has mutated to survive the shift to secularization.

Like the monotheistic faiths that birthed it, and like any good ideology, the most vociferous adherents to secular humanism have all the zeal of a good fanatic. Take Sam Harris, one of the four highly-syndicated New Atheists, the founder of a not-for-profit corporation promoting science and secularism, and the author of various media stridently criticizing religion and similarly promoting a scientific worldview. A repeated theme in Harris' work is that the world would improve socially and morally were a scientific worldview to be more generally and fully adopted, a repetition of the evangelical history of monotheism. Attempting to overcome David Hume's Is-Ought Problem, Harris believes science can answer moral questions and reveal to us an objective morality - similarly repeating religious history, his faith leads him to conclude that *civilization is at war with Islam* and to advocate for a one-world, surveillance-based government. Here again are the forces of light and the forces of darkness. The Crusades and Utopia linger on: Harris is a best-selling author.

But Harris' frothing utopianism and apocalypticism is only the latest secular creed employed to call for a universal empire, to champion the remaking of the world for the better through crusading violence, and to endorse the

indubitable good of spreading the faith: the Nazism of Hiter and his coterie[26]; the communism of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao, with their Marxist ideologies; and the neoconservatism of the Bush regime[27] were all essentially expressions of post-monotheism. They all partook of an apocalyptic eschatology, a necessary period of blood and fire that would usher in a new utopia, with unseen universal laws of History or Race or Democracy - a depersonified *God On Our Side* - assuring their victory and righteousness.

Thus, with all of its permutations across time and space, with the rise and fall of particular empires and religions, the core characteristics of the Western slave ideologies have remained quite consistent - dualistic ontologies and moralities, rationalist optimism and ameliorism, absolute and transcendental value and truth theories, and deific or Humanist conceptions of a historical destiny.

Regrettably for anyone seriously interested in an exodus from the millennia of misery and delusion we call civilization, these reifications have been lifted more or less wholesale, consciously or not, from slave ideologies, morphed slightly, and incorporated into critical theories predicated on the very same self-alienation that created civilization and its wretched slavery and ecocide in the first place. Purporting to liberate, they can only bring a new form of captivity. Included among these insufficiently critical, pseudo-liberatory ideologies are most forms of anarchism.

The True Believers: Anarchism as a Continuance of the Western Mythos

"[...] if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish Him."

Mikhail Bakunin
God and the State

"Modern politics is a chapter in the history of religion. The greatest of the revolutionary upheavals that have shaped so much of the history of the past two centuries were episodes in the history of faith - moments in the long dissolution of Christianity and the rise of modern political religion. The world in which we find ourselves at the start of the new millennium is littered with the debris of utopian projects, which though they were framed in secular terms that denied the truth of religion were in fact vehicles for religious myths."

John Gray
Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia

Far too many radicals who are born and bred of Western culture are creatures of their habitat, caught up in and buffeted about by its currents. They tend to, whether they like or acknowledge it or not, have their views and ideas overwhelmingly and unconsciously shaped by the values and discourses inculcated and articulated to them by their caregivers and peers long before they had much of a capacity or inclination to critique them.

As people born and raised in the so-called West, we are highly prone to thinking and acting like monotheists or post-monotheists, raised to believe that value is something absolute, transcendental, and/or universal; that the world is composed of dualistic categories; and that humans are different from all other creatures, that humans have reason and can be masters of their collective fate, that humans can accumulate moral and practical knowledge that improves life for the next generation, that humans have a meaningful collective history consisting of a fall and/or redemption, that humans uniquely have the power to save or destroy the world, and so on. Even if many of us want to immediately balk at most or all of that as claptrap when it is laid out

fully and bluntly, we are still prone to holding unexamined beliefs according to those themes.

Anyone doubting what I describe above is welcome to test my assessment through conversation at their local radical space or, even more easily, a cursory examination of contemporary North American anarchist media.

To begin with, many anarchists are more or less self-transparently, more or less heavily influenced by Marxist narratives of history, accounts of value, and understandings of human sociality. Insofar as they are, they are plainly believers in the religious motifs outlined above, the most obvious of which is a belief in an apocalyptic event in the near future, whether brought by some inevitable force of history or by the acts of righteous crusaders, that will transform their lives and the world in accordance with justice[28].

Even those who eschew the most retrograde aspects of Marxist critique are, in many cases, still Humanists, still believers in a *Humanity* that is essentially good and possessed of a positive historical destiny. Often on display in these analyses is a more or less explicit vision of a global anarchist society, highly organized yet, somehow, non-coercive, non-ecocidal, and non-hierarchical.[29] The Humanist idea of a singular morality revealed by reason, an essential human nature, or a spontaneous human capacity for complex self-organization, according to this view, would both undergird this society and make it just. Typically implicit in this strain of analysis is that the physical and ideological infrastructure of civilization is, fundamentally, a positive for human beings, simply one that has been perverted through class, racial, and gendered forms of oppression. Through some combination of evangelism and violence, such radicals envision a crusade that would spread their ostensibly liberated way of life across the world, confident that they would not reconstitute statist and bureaucratic forms in doing so as well as that the many unbelievers would get on their side

if only they were really exposed to the good word.

In recent years, many members of North American radical milieux have increasingly practiced and preached what is variously known as *anti-oppression practice*, or, usually pejoratively, *identity politics*, a mode of analysis that depends on flattening complex and fluid individuals into eidolons of dualistic identity schemes.[30] Here, we have our anarchist demonology: a belief in abstract categories of persons who are, through a usually poorly-explained process, ruining things for another abstract category of good and innocent victims. Even anarchists who eschew this more virulent and obvious form of dualism tend nonetheless to fall into understanding the world as composed of heroes and villains or exploited and exploiters, with the former consisting of radicals and somehow latently or innately virtuous everypersons and the latter as, variously, wealthy capitalists, members of the political class, generals, bureaucrats, and similar figures.[31] While a radical critique must of course recognize the existence of entrenched elites and the manipulative role of their interests and machinations, dualistic perspectives tend to downplay, ignore, or even morally denounce the observation that the daily self-alienation and submission of nearly everyone is necessary for and enormously contributory to our present crisis and similarly disregard the fact that these elites also tend to submit their desires and lives to the ideologies and physical infrastructure of civilization.

What of the most consistently radical and critical forms of anarchism, those that purport to reject the civilized way of life altogether? US-based radicals John Zerzan and Kevin Tucker have self-consciously staked out an anarchist position, Anarcho-Primitivism (henceforth AP, whether as a noun or adjective, and APs to refer to the two authors[32]) for nearly three decades. They present this position as both distinct from and as a corrective to the kind of anarchist views I loosely sketched above, toward which they are regularly

hostile; but my assertion is that they have never successfully escaped the trappings of slave ideology in their critique.

In an effort at hedging, partially conscious of their religious motifs, they have each independently and repeatedly claimed not to be offering an ideology[33], but a "critique with implications".[34] And in an effort to escape the Humanism of past iterations of anarchism, they place biocentrism[35] or Nature at the core of their view. Taking them in good faith, I have no doubt this effort at escaping the incomplete critiques of the past and present is genuine. And, certainly, radicals everywhere have good reason to be thankful to Zerzan and Tucker for their very important critiques of previously underexplored aspects of our crisis, such as agriculture, mass society, and technology.

But AP is ultimately another theory of partial liberation, another iteration of post-monotheistic civilized discourse. Convolutedly and covertly, the AP analysis repeats these same failures of dualism, reification, Humanism, and millenarianism. AP is another doctrine based on being a *true believer*, one who knows and follows the One, the Good, and the True; one who believes in their righteousness in the present and their inevitable apocalyptic deliverance in the future; one who hates and wants to punish non-believers and villains; and one who does not sully themselves by suffering uncleanliness and doubt.

Part II:

A Polemic

"These notions of human nature, of justice, of the realization of the essence of human beings, are all notions and concepts which have been formed within our civilization, within our type of knowledge and our form of philosophy, and that as a result form part of our class system; and one can't, however regrettable it may be, put forward these notions to describe or justify a fight which should - and shall in principle – overthrow the very foundations of our society."

Michel Foucault

Gaian Platonism, Green Manichaeism: Dualism and the Absolute in Anarcho-Primitivism

Like other true believers before them, APs construe the world dualistically. For them, the world is, and has been for at least 10,000 years, a physical and spiritual battlefield: the forces of light - Nature, "wildness", and most non-human organisms - are locked in a war of annihilation with those of darkness - Civilization, domestication, and "the domesticators" or "the civilizers".[36] In their "spiritual movement"[37], as with Manichaeism before it, each human is a microcosm of this battlefield and must choose their side: "The refusal of domestication, the giving over to wildness [...] what I call the primal war [...]" [38] In order to unpack this dualism, each of these dimensions will be examined.

Elusive Anathema: The Vagaries of "Domestication"

Domestication is the mainstay of the AP analysis; they have explicitly identified it numerous times across their media as their primary theoretical innovation and the basis of our crisis. If anarchism has been the effort to locate and eliminate "power", Tucker suggests, then AP has correctly located

the source of power with domestication.[39] The broader implications of this theoretical orientation of trying to locate and eliminate power will be examined later - for now, we will address the separate assertion that domestication is being deeply and usefully analyzed through AP.

It is seductive to talk of domestication in anarchist theory: it applies that familiar "logocracy of the left"[40] - *domination* and *exploitation* - to a new dimension. Simply import one's Humanist nausea toward violence and power to a new victim, Nature/wildness - *et voilà!* The egalitarian idea that power can and ought to be eliminated leads directly to the idea that we can exit our crisis by simply learning how to stop exerting said power over Nature/wildness, echoing the familiar Manichaean theme, ideas of universal love, and Humanist ethics. It is pleasingly simple and elegant.

Reductionist analyses have an undeniable charm: that promise of having complex phenomena be so comprehensible through just one or a few principles, the idea that, post-epiphany, one has a simple schema that can be brought to bear to understand every aspect of our crisis from now on. Referring to the source of our crisis, Tucker asserts, "There is *no question* what [the origin] was: domestication. [emphasis added]"[41] It has been found out. It can be easily explained to anyone. Couple it with a teleological worldview, and one is then on the right side, maybe even the winning one. There was a way in; there is a way out. The way out is coming. A banner can be raised, and the people can be swayed, which, we shall see, is an important part of the perspective.

It follows from asserting this need for the cessation of domestication that one needs to know clearly what the odious action is and how to stop doing it. And it is here that the AP analysis first stumbles: their definition is hopelessly vague and slippery, and even at its best runs into something like a Sorites Problem[42] - where does it end and begin? More deeply, the assertion of a natural, prelapsarian absence in

the nonhuman of what they condemn in the corrupt human world simply does not hold up when confronted with empirical reality. Finally, their analysis of power and domination, as I adumbrated above, is rooted in a retrograde Humanist anarchism. These issues will be examined over the next two sections of this piece; but before going further in unpacking these flaws, I want to touch on what the APs have done well in this respect.

No radical analysis worth a damn can fail to critique agriculture and animal husbandry and understand how important subsistence is to anarchist theory. The APs get this, and I sincerely thank them for popularizing these ideas in spite of my critique of how they have gone about doing so. Let me be unequivocal when I say that agriculture and animal husbandry are part of the foundation of the past and present ecocide and slavery that has characterized so much of our crisis.[43] Looking to the origins of civilization, abduction suggests that the enslavement of nonhuman animals, which we noted appears to have closely followed the birth of religion, provided the material and ideological infrastructure for the enslavement of humans.44 Biologically, we might say that the human life strategy transitioned profoundly from one of free-living and mutualism to one of extremely virulent and self-destructive physical and psychological parasitism, both human-on-nonhuman and human-on-human, that became highly successful and spread; our present crisis can be understood as a highly mediated, decadent form of this early and profound change in our mode of subsistence. The immense multiplication of labor and other energy inputs inherent in this anti-ecological orientation of agriculture and animal husbandry prefigure not only human slavery, but also militaristic expansionism, industrialism, the toxicity of pesticides and herbicides, climate change, and genetic engineering in their most basic principles, with the whole terrible lot being simply an exten-

sion of scale and time. A truly liberatory form of life must involve, minimally, a means of subsistence that does not destroy the habitat of organisms and that is not generative of slavery. Thus, it is not that I am rejecting an understanding of domestication *in the sense of the practice of agriculture and animal husbandry*, either as an historical event or an ongoing behavior, as irrelevant to a liberatory critique - far from it, I see it as crucial for a truly radical analysis.

More than that, there is value in domestication as a bit of poetry or metaphor for our crisis. When Zerzan writes, "Zoos and marine parks showcase further slavery, a fitting complement to the captivity at large"[45], he is surely on the mark, just as Desmond Morris was when he compared human cities to zoos and noted the similar mental deterioration each inflicted on its inhabitants.[46] On the same theme, a friend of mine noted, "cities are not fitting human habitat. Architecturally, in form and function, they resemble nothing so much as endless aisles of battery hen cages." I would add that it is only fitting, then, that just as the farmer responds to their chickens killing one another from the stress of captivity by debeaking the prisoners, so the liberal wing of the US political class is attempting to solve a similar problem by disarming its prisoners through gun control. These comparisons are highly illustrative of the depth of our crisis, so long as they are deployed self-consciously and self-critically as mere analogies.

But it is clear that the AP conception of domestication, while involving the above, is something not delimited by the two valences I gave it. From an earlier version of this essay as well as from other vectors, the AP's adventurous use of *domestication* has come under criticism, eliciting bristly responses from its exponents. Tucker complains that critics like me ought to "[accept] the term as it is and has been [used]. It's not a contested discussion for the rest of society." Tucker feels we should defer to popular opinion on

this one - I suppose we could cut the whole discussion short and do the same with terms like "civilization". He continues, "There's a definition and it's a very simple term in practice: was there intentional manipulation of the genetics of an individual species that befits the groomer over the groomed [...] the term itself is fairly [sic] universal in its understanding and acceptance."[47]

Tucker is wrong twice in four sentences here - we will see that he often manages such densities of error. First, the term's definition is contested[48], and some of that contestation is quite similar to criticisms that I have voiced in the past, the ones Tucker has ridiculed as my "pontificating". But he is even more straightforwardly wrong - and either being disingenuous or experiencing some serious cognitive dissonance - in the way that he attempts to shore up the AP thesis here: the way AP uses the term domestication is leaps and bounds beyond the short, genetics-based definition that he is giving here - if anyone is guilty of stretching the generally accepted definition, it is the APs.

A short aside to highlight this first example of a favored AP debate cantrip: the Motte-and-Bailey Fallacy, a sneaky way of making a shitty argument superficially appear more reasonable. Named after the terms for a medieval keep and courtyard, the fallacy occurs when an arguer "switches at will between a 'motte' (an easy-to-defend and often common-sense statement, such as 'culture shapes our experiences') and a 'bailey' (a hard-to-defend and more controversial statement, such as 'cultural knowledge is just as valid as scientific knowledge') in order to defend their viewpoint. Someone will 'support' the easy-to-defend (motte) temporarily, to ward off critics, but does not actually believe what they're saying. The 'difficult' (bailey) version always remains the desired belief, but is never actually defended."[49] Tucker defends a scientific-sounding definition when he is being criticized, but freewheels with his use of the term in his

writing and speeches. This is the first clear instance of what is a recurring theme of bad and/or disingenuous argumentation from the APs.

Looking across a diversity of AP text and speech, "domestication" refers not simply to physical/genetic changes; the word is also is a denotation of a metaphysical category, a reference to disciplinary social forces, and a name for a source of sacred contagion. The term's use is thus reflective of AP's metaphysical adventurousness, essentialism, and reductionism.

The metaphysical valence of domestication directly addresses the dualistic, lapsarian aspects of AP. Domestication demarcates two different worlds in time due to an "original trauma"[50] after which all has changed, be it a "cosmic change"[51] for the world or "the destruction of the soul"[52] for the individual. At the same time, in the present, a creeping taint spreads as, "Domesticated plants and animals replace wildness."[53] It is plain that we are talking here not of a change in tendencies, a difference in emphasis, a magnification of qualities that existed before, or the different avenues of an essentially chaotic world; but rather a passage from one side to the other of essentially opposed, mutually exclusive forces with celestial stakes involved. These changes turned in the past and continue to turn in the present on the choices of the *Human*, as protagonist, as it is a lie that "what happened was a matter of inevitability."[54]

A far cry from either the intentional, cross-generational genetic transformation of nonhumans or the irreducible quintessence of the Good, domestication about as often refers to social discipline, as when "Our submission to the system is our domestication".[55] One could just as well - and far more clearly - say *subjectivation* or *discipline* when Tucker calls domestication "the internalized system: the cop, missionary, politician, economist, and worker in our heads".[56]

Returning again to an ontological dualism, we see

that the act of domestication is a source of spiritual pollution, as when "The self/Other split begins with domestication"[57] or when one "breaks away from wildness through what it eats [domesticated foods]".[58] As we will see later, the APs are very quick to explain away any behavior among indigenous societies that is in breach of their Humanist ethics by reference to any evidence of domestication among them, often in ways that seem *ad hoc*. The sacred contagion of this act means that such people are already postlapsarian, and we ought therefore to expect moral turpitude from them.

Somewhere vaguely among these four meanings – genetic, metaphysical, social, and spiritual - are the numerous references across the literature comparing domestication to dependency, perceived dependency, and control.

What can it mean for a theoretical term to refer to so many different things? At times, across only a page of an AP text where the word appears more than once, there is slippage among these meanings. Domestication can even have contradictory meanings, as when "Our own self domestication has not changed who we are[!]"[59] – so it does not seem to create or prescribe different metaphysical categories or entail spiritual pollution, after all – or "domestication is not some monolithic and irreversible event in the past, but a constant reality that we recreate daily through our own lives"[60] – and so it is therefore not an "original trauma" or "cosmic change", which is a decidedly singular, presumably at least semi-permanent event.

The danger of reductive analyses lies in falling in love with one's schema, such that one becomes more inclined to collapse complex, multi-factorial phenomena into one's existing theory rather than let the phenomena revise the theory. On just this subject, Ernst Mach gave the eloquent warning, *"A person who knew the world only through the theatre, if brought behind the scenes and permitted to view the mechanism of the stage's action, might possibly be-*

lieve that the real world also was in need of a machine-room, and that if this were once thoroughly explored, we should know all. Similarly, we, too, should beware lest the intellectual machinery, employed in the representation of the world on the stage of thought, be regarded as the basis of the real world."[61]

Tucker has had occasion more than once to protest to me that all language entails this kind of reification, and of course he is partially right; but, for me, this is all the more reason to be hyper-vigilant and measured in how we deploy it. When a word exhibits this kind of intense slippage in meaning, when it comes to be a signifier for the evil half of a dualism, when it means transgression and pollution assuredly while picking out the forbidden acts only vaguely; it is not a term of critical theory, but one of morality, a *margarine word*, a word "whose function is to circulate, not to mean".[62] It is used less to convey information or describe phenomena than to indicate the user holds a certain moral position. It is a shibboleth, a password: reject domestication unequivocally, and thus display righteousness. This residue gleams clearly in certain moments, as when Kevin writes: *"The one message that I hope people can learn from the history of domestication is that humans, like any other animal, aren't meant to control the world around it* [sic] *and dictate its relationships."*[63] There are things *we must not do*, and one of them is to control the world around us; but, as we will see in a later discussion, the phrase "control the world", like "dependency", is as vague as "domestication" and thus similarly problematic.

Like the other post-monotheists before him, Tucker's moral dualism demands a demonology, a cast of shadowy villains who are never clearly described but nonetheless assuredly menacing: "the domesticators" or "the civilizers". Periodically referenced in his writings, Tucker *never once* bothers explaining who these figures are. Perhaps he thinks it should be obvious. Are the members of the global billion-

aire class domesticators? What about those of the American political class? The police? Is a prison guard a domesticator? How about a public school teacher? A parent who encourages their child to work hard? A dog breeder? The security guard at a grocery store? A farmer? Is a farmer who uses pesticides more of a domesticator than an organic farmer? Am I a domesticator when I get annoyed at hunters sneaking onto what I sometimes thoughtlessly call "my land" and post "No Trespassing" signs? What about when I brew beer for myself and my friends?

Again, the problem with blaming "the domesticators", as with "the bourgeoisie" or any other identity category, is that it downplays or ignores the empirical fact that mass submission – the self-alienation each of us may engage in with certain of our daily thoughts and acts – and atomization is even more contributory to our crisis than repression and propaganda, as enormous as the latter are. Put another way, one of the most terrible aspects of our crisis is that there is a sense in which everyone is an oppressor and everyone a victim.

At times, Tucker is completely lucid about this, such as where he writes, *"At no point was there a conscious choice to be civilized [...] I don't think that the first people to domesticate plants and animals knew what they did would turn the world they loved into something to eventually fear."*[64] But, just as often, the demons are afoot, hatching Machiavellian schemes: *"the domesticators have [...] tricked us from birth"*[65], *"[...] without my soul, I am as good as dead. The domesticators have known this for a long time. [...] to domesticate, you must break someone mentally, physically, and spiritually [... which is] the primary goal of domesticators."*[66], *"[if] the civilizers have their way[, they will] take their empires to the logical conclusion: complete destruction of all life."*[67] Tucker thus vacillates between an image of a crisis into which we have, at least partially, unintentionally stumbled, and an image

in which we are being preyed upon by manipulative Others with apparently quasi-deific powers.[68]

These problems of invoking ontological and moral dualisms, slippage and equivocation, untenable moralistic reproach, and indeterminacy inherent in the AP use of "domestication" that I have raised thus far become even more obvious and show their theoretical unviability when we examine the other half of the dualism: wildness, nature, and the nonhuman.

Unum, Bonum, Verum Redux: "For Wildness" and "animals point to the right road"

"What were the advantages of the Christian moral hypothesis? [...]
2. It served the advocates of God insofar as it conceded to the world, in spite of suffering and evil, the character of perfection - including 'freedom': evil appeared full of meaning.
3. It posited that man had a knowledge of absolute values and thus adequate knowledge precisely regarding what is most important [...]"

Friedrich Nietzsche
The Will to Power

References to "wildness" are central to Tucker's version of AP. Almost never mentioned by Zerzan, he has nonetheless never criticized the term and, as we shall see later, endorses a similar reification through his references to nature and moral endorsements of nonhuman animals. Tucker's use of "wildness" exhibits the same slippery-margarine characteristics of "domestication", while Zerzan's moral acrobatics expose either a dedication to cherry-picking or a presumably ideological ignorance of the actual behavior of nonhumans.

The variable apparent meanings of wildness mirror those of domestication. There is the physical/genetic

valence, as when, quoting Paul Shepard approvingly, Tucker writes "'Wildness [...] is a genetic state.' Wildness is *our* genetic state."[69] Tucker has made his admiration for Shepard obvious, leading me to wonder whether he began using the term "wildness" because of Shepard's influence. But, in *Coming Home to the Pleistocene*, Shepard's use of the term does not exhibit nearly the slippage that Tucker gives it - while still dubious, it is clearly a genetics-based claim about human nature. Tucker's use goes vastly beyond that of his possible predecessor, drifting freely from one ontological category to another. With possible self-transparency and hesitation, Tucker often deploys the word with a vanguard and rearguard of qualifiers and negative descriptions: "I can't say what it is that I feel [...] I can say that I feel something," and "I'm not talking about some new age 'oneness'".[70]

Sometimes, wildness seems to refer to an either feral or never-socialized state or act, as when "we fear the wildness we are born into [...] such a savage, primal state".[71] Here, wildness is the antithesis of domestication-as-subjectivation. Thus, one sense in which we could "give over to wildness" would be to embrace an active anarchism as a form of life.

Moving from the social to the metaphysical, though Tucker frequently expresses an allergy to a vaguely dismissed "new age 'oneness'"[72], he nonetheless most frequently seems to be positing some kind of universalizing force or essential connective substance in his references to wildness, as when he refers to "that spirit is what connects an individual to the [...] wildness around them." Is "wildness" therefore an essence one is connected to via a spirit, or are wildness and the spirit one and the same? One is left guessing, as we hear also of "wildness that flows between living beings"[73] – at times, it is even composed of divisible units, "pieces of wildness".[74]

This same elusive substance or relation is purported to have curative properties, as "When we learn to open

ourselves to wildness [...] the organic anarchy of our beings will flow."[75] Sounds hot. Thus, while the act of domestication or the consumption of its products brings spiritual pollution, a connection to wildness - or is it the connection *that is* wildness? - brings spiritual renewal.

Perfectly paralleling *domestication*, wildness refers at once to the genetic, the metaphysical, the social, and the spiritual, effectively bleaching it of any clear meaning and theoretical relevance. It is yet another margarine word, a word for moral posturing, rhetorical bludgeoning, and subcultural positioning. If one is "For Wildness"[76], they are one of the good guys; not for it? – Get Fucked.

In a lucid moment, Tucker laments, "I often wish that Nature was [sic] real"; and he at least partially grants his own wish, but simultaneously denies it through his own internal dissonance and public equivocation. Knowing on some level his own ontology's disconcerting post-monotheism, Tucker, in another instance of hedging, insists that "wildness" is not synonymous with Nature[77] and elsewhere asserts, sensibly, that "There is no 'Nature', alone and isolated outside of our grasp"[78], even though he regularly uses this term uncritically, with no such qualifiers, elsewhere in his writing.[79] Yet wildness seems to be precisely the same elusive, perhaps undefinable, but nonetheless essential substance of the world posited by 'Nature', perhaps independent of any given being as when there is "a war against looming wildness"[80], one fought against "the state of wildness",[81] one being lost as "there isn't enough wildness left [...] wildness is running thin."[82]

In the end, when one wades through the obscurantism, *wildness* is that same old transcendental Good, the theological Other, the existential signifier – it gives meaning, purpose, and an objective scale of value to the world, completing the AP ontological and moral dualism. Like other post-monotheistic worldviews, this status is typically

not explicitly asserted, but only gestured at, implied, or quietly assumed – it is readily understood when one consciously or unconsciously assumes the existence of good and evil, a world torn in two, before critique begins.
"We do it by living as a part of this self-destructive system and continually denying our own wildness, or we give into our animality, our wildness, and do something about it. I consider this taking part in the primal war: the refusal and resistance to domestication wherever and whenever it has imposed itself on life and the world."

We could not have much clearer echoes of Augustine's war between Jehovah and Lucifer, Mani's light and darkness: good is pitted against evil in the microcosm of the individual human choice in simultaneity with a cosmological war. "The earth is strong. Wildness is strong. The only thing holding it back is us."83 The human is again the unique protagonist, the architect of fate - everything else is an already-decided background, the stage on which the collective human subject acts.

Shortly after receiving and rejecting an earlier, far shorter version of this essay, Tucker responded to unspecified "critics" by writing an essay entirely on the topic of wildness, seemingly for clarification and apologetics.[84] But the piece only affirms my previous criticisms and shows how deeply - and perhaps unconsciously - committed Tucker is to his post-monotheist worldview. Three aspects are relevant here.

The first is how Tucker seems to miss my point, perhaps because it is incomprehensible to him. Mounting a defense, Tucker begins by saying, "Wildness, at least how I experience and conceptualize it, is sacred: that word is an indicator, not an encapsulation [...] That the term *wildness*

can be written off isn't an indication of how the word itself is reification, our abstract representation, because all words are arguably reifications." Tucker is muddying the waters here - one would certainly hope a word to be merely an "indicator" and not endorsing a reification in any and every case that someone purports to be venturing truly critical theory, at least if one had not given oneself wholly over to the worst excesses of a reified worldview that sees language as *causa sui*. But the issue is not whether or not *a particular word, devoid of context* involves reification, since it always depends on how the word is being used, by whom, and in what form of communication. I can talk about Yahweh critically, as I did above, or I can do so to assert the existence of a deity. The issue is whether *the theory being articulated by the words* endorses, encourages, and involves reification - which it assuredly does in Tucker's case.

If Tucker were *only and precisely* saying, as he seems to think himself doing here, that the world cannot be captured perfectly and entirely in symbols; that there is always something that escapes definition, comprehension, hypostatization; that the world is essentially flux and not stasis; then he would of course be right, and we would agree. But he clearly means something else from his words here and elsewhere. Here, as before, he runs into the motte to hide from critique while he dreams always of the bailey.

The second relevant issue is that in the course of over 6,500 words purportedly aimed at "Speak[ing] of Wildness", Tucker pointedly offers *no positive definition of the term whatsoever* – instead, with obvious pride, he engages in the AP analogue of apophatic theology, a form of Christian apologetics in which the fact that accounts of Jehovah are difficult or impossible to reconcile with human rationality is a sign of their *strength*, not their weakness: God cannot be comprehended and is infinitely beyond the human, therefore we cannot say what God *is*, only what God is *not*.

I do not here mean to say that wildness is a more or less straightforward analogue of God – in spite of Tucker's complaints,[85] it certainly is not what I mean – but mean instead to point out yet another way in which AP is *post*-monotheistic, participating in the same *patterns* as monotheism: in this case, that a transcendental signifier surely exists, but it cannot be described; yet *the fact that it cannot be described* only makes it more magnificent for the true believer. Thus, "Wildness is a complicated concept [...] that the word is indefinable speaks to its complexity, it demands engagement [...it] transcends space and time." It is made very clear that wildness is neither wilderness nor nature, but never exactly what it *is*; yet, "The inability to define wildness attests to its enduring strength. It refuses constraint."

The last relevant issue is Tucker's perhaps surprising personal revelation as a *bona fide* mystic.[86] Again, this is not my caricature: Tucker devotes about a thousand words of this piece to stories of how one or more Great Horned Owls, among other animals, repeatedly visited him to communicate to him the deaths of his loved ones and for other significant personal events. The first time was a transformational experience for him: "*The night that stood out so clearly in my memory stands out because it was the time when the rational, domesticated part of my brain broke down. When the probability of coincidence was worn too thin and the veneer cracked.* [sic] *There is something here.*"

A retrospective reading of all of Tucker's work *as mysticism* thus becomes possible - his whole oeuvre becomes much more comprehensible. Like Zoroaster and Mani before him, Tucker's belief structure is founded on a revelatory spiritual experience that transformed him. That much of his writing is peppered with ardent paeans and urgent assertions - "Wildness exists", "I believe in human nature"[87], "My spirit knows this. My spirit *feels* this. The spirit of all life knows this. It has always known this. I've

only begun to listen"[88], "When we learn to open ourselves to wildness and chaos, the organic anarchy of our beings will flow."[89] – can suddenly be read in an entirely different light.

Tucker was visited repeatedly:

"[…] the Great Horned has come numerous times. As grandparents passed, as relatives took their own lives or succumb [sic] to cancer or diabetes, as family and their acquaintances overdosed; every time, we get the news from this majestic winged hunter […] A Rattlesnake made themselves known to indicate that a family member had died from heroin overdose, a fitting messenger for having injected too much venom."

The gravity of these assertions is enormous: not only do nonhuman organisms communicate to humans about their personal trials, they actually elect to deliver particular messages based on the possible human metaphorical interpretation of their bodies. Tucker's repudiation of anthropocentrism, already difficult to take seriously for reasons I have highlighted thus far, now passes into the realm of farce.

Lest I seem ultra-jaded, a pause for clarification: Do nonhumans regularly communicate with humans? Of course. Do we miss much, or even nearly all, of this communication, because of our enculturation and isolation from nonhumans? I find this easy to believe. Have we lost faculties for intuition and empathy because of the overdevelopment of our rational and religious tendencies? I have little doubt. But to assert that particular animals visit particular humans during milestones of those humans' lives to convey to those humans these particular messages – of what exactly? the information itself, or their accompanying congratulations or condolences? – is leaps of faith beyond the above suppositions.

Typically, Tucker hedges, saying of his messengers that "it is not their purpose to serve you", and he quickly attempts to shore up his stories by drawing disanalogous

comparisons to decontextualized statements made by two indigenous people, one talking about having greater empathy and intuition broadly, the other talking about cricket song reflecting buffalo movement, both of which are reflective of the above: sensible suppositions about interspecies communication and in sharp contrast to the characteristics of Tucker's visitations.

One is left wondering, how many hours per week do owls, snakes, and deer spend delivering human messages, given the enormous numbers of humans with whom they cohabitate? Do they maybe only deliver to an elect few, the Anarcho-Primitivists? Why does it seem that only charismatic megafauna deliver messages? Some of the animals that do not appear on liberal not-for-profit's calendars must be involved, right? Do planaria deliver messages about relatives who are hospitalized with feeding tubes? Having turned away from domestication and embraced wildness, we have found in the primal war a fanciful and convoluted way back to the same old anthropocentrism.

Not to be outdone, Zerzan takes the same tack with his recent essay "Animal Dreams".[90] Zerzan's goal in this essay is plainly to repudiate the dreadfully common anthropocentric diminution of the intelligence and inner lives of nonhuman organisms. This goal is certainly worthwhile and admirable, especially in light of Behaviorist/Cartesian residues that linger in both popular and academic cultures.

But Zerzan's actual thesis, never quite stated but inferable, stumbles straightaway and gives away his unexamined ideology – he wants us to value nonhuman animals because they demonstrate or embody Humanist values. That this thesis is a formal fallacy, a case of Begging the Question – we ought to value nonhuman animals because

they demonstrate our popularly-held morals, and we ought to view nonhuman animals as moral exemplars and derive our values from them – apparently does not bother Zerzan, perhaps because he was too busy cherry-picking his evidence by that time in the writing process to notice his circular thesis.

Most of Zerzan's essay consists of highlighting examples of nonhuman animals demonstrating his Left-Humanist, post-monotheist values of egalitarianism, monogamy, gender equality or matriarchy, parental care and affection, honesty, and mercy. Typically green like his cohort, nearly all of Zerzan's examples are charismatic megafauna: geese, wolves, elk, gibbons, and the like. Finishing his feel-good catalogue of animal behavior, Zerzan triumphantly concludes, "We are lost, but animals point to the right road. They are the right road." True to his moral-ontological dualism, Zerzan contrasts this pure and moral animal world with that of civilization. Tucker echoes his friend in a later piece, saying of nonhuman animals: "Their communication has nothing to hide and they share their trepidations widely [...] Wild beings under attack simply respond. They bite. They claw. They tear. It is instinctual and instant, not prolonged and devoid of responsibility."[91] These are our role models, uncorrupted exemplars of the straight and narrow. They take responsibility.

Besides the obviously circular thesis that undermines the entire essay, Zerzan's piece is ridden with problems. Some of his examples are genuine and noteworthy, while others, we will see later, are either misleading or simply demonstrably false. But far deeper is the issue that for every example he gives of a nonhuman animal exemplifying a moral value, there are many more creatures who embody the inverse value. I will give only a few here.[92]

Aiming to exhibit non-patriarchal gender relations among nonhumans, Zerzan highlights prominent female

roles in a few mammals, our closest kin; but the overwhelming majority of mammals are polygynous, often with harem-holding male dominance and sexual dimorphism that leaves the male considerably larger, stronger, and more aggressive. Perhaps the starkest example is that of the elephant seal, in which males engage in ritualized, violent competition for harems of females numbering up to the hundreds.

Moreover, moving away from the advertisement-friendly animals, in a variety of invertebrates, having evolved repeatedly in diverse phyla, mating takes place through *traumatic insemination*, in which a spined - literally weaponized - penis pierces the female's body to deliver sperm directly to her viscera. One theory for why this brutal method evolved is to bypass *mating plugs*, adhesive substances secreted by penises to literally glue a female's reproductive tract closed after mating in order to block the sperm of competing males. I thus shudder at the brazenly general sentiment that "animals [...] are the right road."

Zerzan and Tucker both exalt the honesty and freedom they see in the animal world, as we are told that among the wild, "There is no dependency [...] You can say there is an implicit sense of trust or honesty, but neither word does it justice."[93] But deception and domination are rampant among nonhuman organisms. Whether through Batesian Mimicry, in which non-poisonous animals visually imitate their poisonous relatives to discourage would-be predators, or the lures of the anglerfish or the sundew, who tempt their prey to their doom with the appearance of food or drink, deception is a common tactic for predator and prey. Certain flowers use odors and appearance to fool their pollinators into believing they have an opportunity for sex, such that the insects inadvertently transport pollen by literally attempting to fuck the flower. Lying to one's fellows for short-term, selfish gain is abundant in social primates and social arthropods alike. Even at the smallest levels, there

is cheating: among social bacteria who form cooperative, predatory swarms, a small number of bacteria join the collectives while not producing the proteins necessary for the task, effectively reaping the collective rewards without doing their share of the labor.

As for domination, it is difficult to top the brutality of the many parasitoids.[94] Members of the parasitoidal barnacle genus *Sacculina* attach themselves to their crab hosts, inject their thread-like bodies into the crabs' flesh, winding around their hosts' nervous systems, and literally castrate the crabs in order to hijack their minds and reproductive organs so as to produce more *Sacculina* and have the crab do the protective and caretaking labor. The Gordian Worm larva inhabits an arthropod host and, maturing, forces the host to drown itself so that the adult worm may erupt from its dead body into an aquatic habitat. Female wasps of the genus *Ichneumonidae* inject their eggs and symbiotic viruses into other insect larvae, altering their genome and restricting their metamorphosis to create abnormally large and defenseless larvae that, like bloated cattle, are gradually devoured alive from within by the maturing *Ichneumon* larvae.[95] Similar behavior exists in diverse organisms: mollusks, nematodes, flatworms, and so on, including non-animals like fungi and viruses – in fact, it is likely that the majority of species on Earth are parasitic, creatures who in some way manipulate, dominate, or exploit one or more other creatures.[96] One need look no further for stark examples of the dependence, coercion, and manipulation that the APs decry as unnatural in human domestication.

We are consanguineous with the rest of the world: its flesh is our flesh, and its thoughts are our thoughts. It is unsurprising, then, that we see viciousness and affection, rape and compassion, subjugation and cooperation among the myriad nonhumans just as we see them among humans. An unflinching gaze recognizes that cruelty has always been

present with kindness – that the harshness of natural selection, the tenderness of mutual aid, and the merging of symbiogenesis have all been factors of evolution – and that we can expect the whole gamut of behaviors and values to be perennial in human beings, even in a much lovelier world. It is how life, in the broadest sense, is.

Why, then, is there an urge, conscious or not, on the part of the APs to obfuscate this fact? Why is the world not enough as it is, such that it needs to be glazed over with a feel-good sheen? As Douglas Adams asked, "Isn't it enough to see that a garden is beautiful without having to believe that there are fairies at the bottom of it too?"

In "Animal Dreams", Zerzan cogently indicts others for projecting pecking order, Freudianism, and hierarchy onto the nonhuman world, but then *he does the very same with his own values*; once he has painted the nonhuman biosphere a color of his liking, obscuring and pretending not to notice its incredible variation, he swears his allegiance to it. He asks, posing as the ingénue after his anthropocentric obfuscation, "Might it not be that nature is for the happiness of all species, not just one?"[97] I reply by asking what is this "nature" that is somehow different and standing apart from the gestalt "of all species" and the world's abiotic elements they inhabit and cocreate; and what would it mean for this totality to be "for" anything, as though the gestalt of innumerable valuing beings could somehow emergently value something in and of itself or, even if it did, that we could somehow comprehend this evaluation?

In the same vein, why does Tucker, as discussed above, posit a transcendental wildness that though "unpredictable and chaotic", still tends toward the Good, as though only civilized human activity is pointlessly cruel and cata-

strophic, going so far as to say that random disasters are mostly or entirely the province of civilized human activity, while when it comes to the "cycles of nature", "The only thing they will do for sure is catalyze the life cycles of all living things."[98] Why does he posit what we will later see is a demonstrable falsehood? Why do APs require willed delusions for their ideology?

We see here a profound commitment to *the redemption of the world*, a faith that the world, in the most abstract and general sense, is Good. The flesh is weak, but the soul is willing; or, the human is flawed, but the natural pure. The human is blighted because of an original error, but the nonhuman is just as it should be, just as it always is.

The early theologian Saint Augustine was a major, and still tremendously influential, architect of the Christian faith. Heavily influenced by Manichaeism before his conversion to Christianity, he was the first Christian to popularize the narrative of the history of the world as a war between Jehovah and Satan, one literally fought on Earth between the truly faithful persons and the sinful, diabolic agents. One of Augustine's most powerful apologetics was his doctrine of the two cities, an account of how we now live in a tainted world due to the presence of Original Sin. Though certainly more nuanced than I present it here, it suffices to say for this essay that it was a means of explaining away the problem of evil while maintaining the existence of an all-good, omnipotent God. In spite of Jehovah's existence, evil could be expected to be a perennial problem for humans due to the historical human sin whose consequences even now blighted the physical world.

Augustine's theological innovation performed a powerful ideological function: it effectively explained away all of the horrors and flaws the faithful experienced as an inevitable and obvious consequence of the fallen state of a sinful world; at the same time, it asserted nonetheless the

unassailable existence of an essentially Good ordering principle to the world (Jehovah) that, while not always clearly and consistently felt, was nonetheless most assuredly there. The world was, paradoxically, both deeply and permanently flawed *and* perfectly good, justified, and redeemed by the *unum*, *bonum*, and *verum*. Certainly, things *seemed* bad; but they were perfect in another world, and the fact that they were perfect in another, unseen, imminent world meant assuredly that there was a divine repository of all value. At the Last Judgment, the two cities would be unified, resolving the dualism.

The APs, presumably unconsciously, follow Augustine's example: it is human error in the deep past that is the only blight in an otherwise edenic world, and because of the transcendental ordering principle of the Good (wildness/Nature), the world is justified, redeemed, good, and affirmed in spite of it. Though Zerzan acknowledges, seemingly anticipating a critique like mine, that "All is not sweetness and light in the non-human realm," he softens this admittance by adding "especially in this shaken and disturbed world."[99], as though the human, somehow *causa sui*, were perhaps *really* to blame. Tucker similarly assures us, "The earth is strong. Wildness is strong. The only thing holding it back is us."[100]

And, like the classical Greek Stoics, the APs argue that to live well and justly is to align oneself with this side of the Good, Nature, a notion Nietzsche so effectively ridiculed: *"You desire to LIVE 'according to Nature'? [...which is] boundlessly extravagant, boundlessly indifferent, without purpose or consideration, without pity or justice, at once fruitful and barren and uncertain [...] how COULD you live in accordance with such indifference? [...] Is not living valuing, preferring, being unjust, being limited, endeavouring to be different? [...] In reality, however, it is quite otherwise with you: while you pretend to read with rapture the canon of your law*

in Nature [...] In your pride you wish to dictate your morals and ideals to Nature, to Nature herself, and to incorporate them therein [...]"[101]

Again, we have convoluted anthropocentrism: by claiming to turn away from the human and toward the nonhuman, the APs have in fact projected their own Humanist values unconsciously and clumsily onto something that can only fit their mold through their distortions of it. In various media, Tucker has made his disdain for learning about philosophy and theology clear[102]; being willfully ignorant of the history of slave ideology, he has doomed himself to continue it. Zerzan, whose essays tend to be excessively populated with references to and quotes from a diversity of thinkers, has no such excuse.

Whence comes this desire for a transcendental signifier, for an absolute value, for a world that tends irresistibly toward the Good? It is of course the reified mode of thinking outlined at the beginning of this piece, the urge to *religion* – understood as the combination of self-alienation and the personification of the world – that has been with at least some humans for over eleven millennia, for perhaps three hundred or more generations, and that is held by nearly everyone today, including ostensible liberatory theorists. For it is an unspoken prerequisite of this pseudo-critical theory that before venturing any critique, one must align oneself with some greater good, be it the people, the nation, equality, future generations, any of the fifty-seven varieties of justice, or, in this case, Nature/wildness or the animal. And it seems almost no one can sleep at night or get through their day without belief in such a universalizing, guiding principle.

But as we touched on before, the practice of self-alienation is central to our crisis for the role it plays in mass

submission. A diversity of thinkers[103] have, in their various ways, recognized that our raw – that is, preconceptualized, pretheorized – phenomenal lives are of a participatory, consanguineous character, that we are agents of transformation that self-create our lives and cocreate each other's worlds of becoming-and-passing-away. As much the *subject* as the *object* of our experience, this way of being – which Abram calls "primordial"[104], which Merleau-Ponty found in "the flesh of the world"[105] – refuses both the reification of the object-world that treats subjects as though they were passive victims buffeted about planktonically by greater-than-human forces, *and* the reification of the subject that imagines an atomized Self, hermetically sealed from the world, complete as a thing-in-itself, and independent of its habitat.

We are the habitat *and* the body, the creature *and* the creator. Knowledge and value are felt in the flesh, and are always instrumental and provisional rather than aiming at an imagined ultimate, objective reality disembodied from moment-to-moment participatory existence. Whatever conceptual models we create of our nondualistic experience, whether for communication, prediction, or planning are consistently recognized as being *only models*, to be employed when useful and discarded when not.

But the self-alienated mode of theory – which was called by Abram "a curious inversion of the actual, demonstrable state of affairs"[106] and by Nietzsche "standing truth on her head"[107], which was recognized by figures as diverse as the philosophers Clément Rosset and David Hume, the anarchist Ron Sakolsky, and the anthropologist Karl Schmidt as being closely associated with slavish and submissive behavior – takes various features of our raw phenomenality and reifies them, treating them as variously somehow more real or concrete, isolated from participation and cocreation, *causa sui*, transcendental rather than embodied, and/or Absolute rather than relational. A truly

liberatory critique must reject totally this slave ideology.

AP, as we have seen, does not. To begin with, for APs, the world is torn in three different ways. First, it is *ontologically* dualistic, with civilization/technology/domestication, the domesticated, and the domesticators on the one hand and nature/wildness/certain humans and nonhumans on the other. Second, it is *morally* dualistic in that it places each person, anthropocentrically, as a player in a cosmic struggle between light and darkness, with the burden of choosing sides. Thirdly, it is *temporally* dualistic, enshrining a prelapsarian world from the painful vantage point of the postlapsarian one, holding out the promise of reunion.

With astonishing opaqueness, Zerzan laments how, through the practice of agriculture, one arrives at a worldview of, "Wild or tame, weeds or crops, [which] speak of a duality that cripples the soul of our being"[108], even though AP literature endorses those very same distinctions; and Tucker lambasts the "dualistic reality inherent in the civilized mindset."[109], that "The obedience required by the domesticated demands a world of binary dualisms [sic]: of innately oppositional forces."[110] even as he vociferously espouses such a view in every essay he writes and ridicules those who do not! Thus is the schizoid perspective of the ideologue, where a proposition can be both true and false, right and wrong. The civilized worldview is false and corrupt because it is dualistic; the AP worldview is correct because it has recognized the three true moral, ontological, and temporal dualisms; the nondualistic radical analysis that rejects those dualisms is false because it evades the truth of the dualistic AP worldview, because it is "postmodern" and/or "surrenderist", in Zerzan's choice epithets. Such contortions of logic demand a faithful suspension of analysis, where even dualism itself passes from being right to wrong, true to false, "in a way surpassing understanding."[111]

But, of course, the purpose of ideology is not to give

a coherent view of the world - the purpose of dualistic, reified, dramatic language is to *wave a flag*:
"I am full of suspicion and malice against what they call 'ideals': this is my pessimism [...] every time so far the victory of the ideal has meant a retrograde movement. Christianity, the revolution, the abolition of slavery, equal rights, philanthropy, love of peace, justice, truth: all these big words have value only in a fight, as flags: not as realities but as showy words for something quite different (indeed opposite!)."[112]

Deep Green Ignorance: Anarcho-Primitivism's Verisimilitude of Scientific Legitimacy

"I could always be very wrong."

Kevin Tucker
"Agents of Change", *For Wildness and Anarchy*

In obvious annoyance, Tucker once publicly criticized me by saying, "I have rarely met people who have a hard time getting the concept [domestication] like you!"[113] His invective here is an example of the Common Sense Fallacy. Taking him in good faith, I do not doubt he feels that he is saying something elementary, as the AP analysis, in his view, is empirical, couched in sciences soft and hard: anthropology, biology, ecology. The APs' verisimilitude of scientific legitimacy leads them to tend toward hybrids of the Common Sense Fallacy and the Appeal to Authority: in his public debate with Zoltan Istvan at Stanford University, Zerzan claimed that anyone could open up an anthropology textbook and see that he was right; Tucker claimed in his presentation at the Philadelphia Anarchist Bookfair in 2014 that AP gave anti-civilization anarchism "its teeth" by basing it in the sciences, and he tabled with a zine version of Marshall Sahlins' "The Original Affluent Society". Here and elsewhere, the overall message is *You don't agree with us? What are you,*

stupid? ignorant? anti-science? post modern?!

But do John Zerzan and Kevin Tucker actually have a good understanding of animal behavior and evolution? They make numerous serious errors when they try to talk meaningfully about them - at other times, they seem to be, consciously or not, engaging in the Cherry-Picking Fallacy. Does the mainstream consensus of anthropology support the most adventurous of AP claims? It does not. When APs claim to be grounding their analysis in the sciences, they are at best optimistically cherry-picking, at worst engaging in deception - perhaps we can most generously consider them confused, emotionally wedded to an ideology they have been promulgating for too many years to admit that they are wrong now.



When Zerzan tries to bolster his strange case for the Humanistic virtues of nonhumans, he spouts falsehoods. With disconcerting conservatism, he favorably cites geese as an example of coupling for life monogamously.[114] Why Zerzan is implicitly praising a human institution so closely associated with patriarchy, intimate abuse, manufactured sexual scarcity, and commodity culture is bemusing and troubling *prima facie*; but his information is also simply wrong, as this proposition has been debunked along with so many others about nonhuman monogamy: studies since the late 1970s have found that, for the goose, "promiscuity is a part of the repertoire of yet another seemingly monogamous bird."[115]

Continuing his sentimental quest, Zerzan attempts to declaw the wolf, and perhaps predators in general, by saying it may be the case that "wolves only kill animals that are near their end anyway—the old, sick, injured".[116] Though he hedges it as a supposition ("This seems to be roughly the case"), given the context of his essay, it is difficult not to see

Zerzan attempting to soften predation into a world of mercy and remorse. And, again, he cherry-picks his evidence to find the conclusions he wants, citing one source and ignoring readily available counter-examples.

A 2009 observation of *Canis Lupus* in a region in which they had a variety of potential prey available found, based on sampling the wolves' scat, that 96.4% of the scat held remains of either roe deer or wild boar, thus indicating the wolves' primary prey. Of the prey, 74.1% of the roe deer and 84.2 % of the wild boar were juveniles, less than a year old. Over time, the wolves took turns targeting the roe deer and the wild boar, *each during its birthing period*, for the reasons one might expect: "The positive selection of young roe deer and wild boar may be considered opportunist behaviour, because the individuals of this age class are easier to capture than adults due to their inexperience." Indeed, "Roe deer fawns are left alone by their mothers for long periods of time, making them even more vulnerable to wolf predation [...]" Mercy, it ain't - babynapping, rather. The authors had occasion to cite six previous studies, ranging from 1970 to 2004, that supported the conclusion that wolves target vulnerable juveniles preferentially.[117] One might reasonably infer, as others have, that they might target the elderly and ill for the same reasons of simple ease and opportunism - after all, why work? Far from experiencing mercy or remorse, the manner in which wolf pups play at hunting to gradually increase their skills suggests to me that the wolf feels hunger, desire, joy, and exhilaration as it hunts and kills.

Of course, Zerzan is likely motivated by a desire to redeem the wolf from its popular demonization as infinitely murderous, killing without even the need to eat. To make such a case, I much prefer Farley Mowat, who, besides indicting human civilization as being the real mindless killer, writes at the conclusion of his partially-fictionalized, loosely autobiographical novel *Never Cry Wolf*, "Somewhere to the

eastward a wolf howled [...] for me, it was a voice which spoke of the lost world that was once ours, before we chose the alien role, a world which I had glimpsed and almost entered [...]" Mowat here not only touches on the crucial idea of self-alienation, but also redeems the besmirched wolf *not by apologizing for its killing* (which he discusses in some detail), but rather by pointing at what seems a beautiful intimacy between the wolf and its world. Similarly, in a theme exhibited throughout his work, Nietzsche saw in animality (including uncivilized humans) a kind of profound, child-like innocence that he exalted; not a *moral* innocence of being gentle, humble, and meek, all of which he clearly despised, but an innocence of unmediated life in which one is in tune with their senses, makes no apologies for their instincts, and is unafraid to grasp immediate joy. It is both possible and marvelous to appreciate animals without smearing them with slave ideology and using them as cheap icons to push values that one refuses to create for oneself without mediation.

The first time I ever communicated with John Zerzan at any length, after I had read all of his books, I asked him, earnestly and uncritically, what he thought about the behavior of ants and other nonhumans in the context of his critique of domestication. I had read Tucker saying, "The one message that I hope people can learn from the history of domestication is that humans, like any other animal, aren't meant to control the world around it [sic] and dictate its relationships."[118], and I had doubts that this forbiddance was meaningful or useful for praxis.

I wondered about a number of apparent counterexamples to the AP notion that the dependence, control, and domination involved in domestication was singularly

human and thus represented some kind of profound aberration in what was otherwise the natural order: extreme specialization between plants and pollinators, such as fig trees and fig wasps, which depend totally and exclusively upon one another for survival; mutualistic symbiosis in which one member is dominant, such as sea anemones and clownfish, in which the two mostly cooperate, but wherein hungry anemones are known to at least occasionally devour their erstwhile allies; or the many parasites and parasitoids, a few of which I touched on above, who, variously, exploit their hosts for food and shelter, manipulate their hosts' minds and sexual organs, or even alter their hosts' body morphology and DNA. In these cases, there is dependence, domination, exploitation, and even genetic manipulation.

And what of the incredible qualitative and quantitative range with which humans can interact with their landbase, beginning with simply selecting the most appealing fruits and shitting their seeds, thereby selecting for certain traits? It seemed like AP had a Sorites Problem with its definition: there are always exertions of power, always shapings of one another - so, at what level of dependence, domination, and so forth does domestication begin?

Permaculturist Bill Mollison famously argued that "everything gardens"[119], that is, every organism exerts power to create a favorable environment for itself. Even at the tiniest levels, the bacterium *Lactobacillus*, for one, shits lactic acid that favors itself and its conspecifics but inhibits the growth of many competing molds and bacteria - this act is power, this act is what Tucker condemns as an effort "to control the world [...] and dictate its relationships."

It seems impossible to eliminate power from our relationships, since power is in every act we do, and we see it all around us in the acts of nonhumans with one another. I thus cannot take seriously the idea that power, control, and dependency per se are what problematize inter-organismal

relationships. A Foucauldian analysis of power, normally understood in terms of inter-human relationships, seems equally applicable to ecology: exertions of power characterize all interactions and are inescapable - indeed, one might say organisms are iterations of force and the act of being alive constitutes exertions of power, the cessation of which is one's death. As Nietzsche noted, "[...] there is no 'being' behind the doing, effecting, becoming; 'the doer' is simply fabricated into the doing - the doing is everything."[120]

Rather than run from power, control, and dependency, drawing nonsensical, life-denying barriers around them; we might instead acknowledge and seek to understand our power over other organisms, how we are shaping them and they us. It is not that "everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous", and we may thus move toward a "hyper - and pessimistic"[121] awareness of what our power means and how it can be more life-affirming for ourselves and our fellow creatures. Instead of asking, *Is this domestication?* or *How do I avoid exerting power over other organisms?*, we might look instead at questions like: *How can I interact with my habitat in a way that enriches it for myself and other creatures? How do I coparticipate in creating the land rather than manage it? How do I have mutualistic rather than antagonistic relationships with the creatures around me? Are there changes I can make in anticipation of climate change that will keep my landbase healthy for myself and others? Which forms of subsistence tend toward slavery and ecocide and why – and which tend toward anarchy and flourishing? What are the consequences of this particular act now, five years from now, ten years from now, and one hundred years from now?*

Returning to the question of ants, these beautiful little creatures are a particularly interesting example of this phenomenon because there are several species that employ subsistence strategies that, if not fully deserving the titles of

animal husbandry and agriculture, are certainly *extremely* similar. Several ant species exist in symbiosis with other insects, such as scale insects or aphids, that they employ essentially as cattle: the symbiotes feed on plant tissue that is indigestible to the ants and secrete a high-calorie fluid that the ants harvest, just as humans employ domesticated cattle to process biomass from inedible forms to edible ones. The ants protect their cattle from predators and herd them, even moving their eggs to overwinter in ant nests and moving adults bodily to preferred plants. As for agriculture, the several species of leafcutter ants earn their title by harvesting plant leaves, processing them with their mandibles and saliva, and feeding the resultant pulp to a symbiotic fungus on which they feed, tending it even to the point of doing a kind of monocultural pest control: the ants eliminate parasitic fungi that attack their crop through the application of fungicides manufactured by symbiotic bacteria that grow on their exoskeletons. Especially noteworthy is the way in which this fungus resembles many human domesticates – it exists nowhere outside of ant territories and is as utterly dependent on the ants for survival as they are on it.

Zerzan's answer to my ant query was more or less a non-answer - he dismissed the question: it was not domestication because it was not done by humans. Only Humanity can do the unnatural for the AP - it is the divine *causa sui*.

Tucker recently posted a longer answer to this question (asked by someone else who e-mailed him) on his blog, seemingly considering it a great answer that he wants many people to read. In dissecting this reply, I will quote it in its entirety to show how it is ridden with confusion, bizarre claims, and outright misinformation:

"As far as we might know it, ant "agriculture" [note the sneer quotes, a favorite tactic of Tucker's][122] is an evolved trait, ostensibly one they could have always have had (likewise, it

could be recent). Domestication by/of humans is historical, it represents a change in subsistence strategy and evolutionary trajectory."[123]

What ants do is "evolved"; what humans do is "historical" - once again, the human is special, standing apart. Does Kevin think the ants did not evolve their farming and husbandry behaviors from an earlier point of not having done these things (which they, in fact, did), that they popped into existence complete and unchanging? One of these animals is not like the other - but, how, exactly? What does it mean to say what humans do is "historical", not "evolved"? Does Kevin think that the capacity for civilization came from someplace non-genetic? Or is Kevin thinking humans have not evolved in the past several millennia (which, in fact, they have) - is that what he is trying to say? But, wait, this "historical" change of humans "represents a change in [...] evolutionary trajectory", so it *is* evolutionary change, but, somehow, still different from the ants? Tucker cannot make up his mind here. Humans *have* in fact changed genetically - that is, evolved - during historical time, so what distinction is Kevin trying to make? Is he really just saying he *does not like* certain things that happened, that they are *against his self-created values*? Why doesn't he just say so? Because he needs a transcendental signifier to say so - *that* is what decides what is good and what is bad.

Tucker has wandered into the confusing world of evolution, one that we will see is very confusing indeed for him. He bases his "critique with implications" partially in science, but any halfway decent biologist would want to keep this man away from the classroom, except perhaps a "creation scientist" - they could allow Kevin to "teach the controversy". Humans are not like monkeys *or* ants!

"We aren't ants. That they might do something doesn't mean

it's [sic] *justifies* [justifies to whom? On what scale of values? To wildness?] *(as the permaculturalists would argue* [who, exactly? Kevin doesn't tell us]*) what we do nor that it's the same thing (next point). A black widow female decapitates and cannibalizes the male after mating. I don't see anyone using that to defend Dahmer."*

Except that, as we have seen, AP bases itself time and again on the idea that animals are moral exemplars, and that the major error among humans is behaving differently from them and that "humans, like any other animal, aren't meant to control the world around it [sic] and dictate its relationships". When nonhumans do things Zerzan and Tucker think are really nifty, they are role models; when they perform sexual cannibalism, they are not. Kevin is hiding in the motte, but he will go lounge in the bailey with one hand on his wildness when we leave him alone with our pesky ant questions.

"I'm not getting domestication from the first part [...] To assert that it's domestication would require that it be a historical change, which isn't what they're arguing. If you are a tiny colony dwelling insect that lives in vast underground tunnels, you aren't domesticated because you live in something that could arguably be considered a "city," that's just their wild state. It's not only anthropomorphization, it's anthropomorphization of a historical circumstance that we propagate."

What? So, now, historical changes are once again *different* from evolutionary ones, when, above, our historical change was *also* an evolutionary one. Kevin really cannot make up his mind - but he knows *something* means he can reject the comparison. Ants at one point did not symbiose with these creatures, and now they do. The same is true of humans. You can call one "history" and one "evolution", but both, as we have seen, involve behavioral and genetic changes across

time in interaction with habitats - history is just the period of that time that civilized humans count. Would Kevin have a problem with what ants do if they were counting the years? Tucker is using a civilized numerical distinction to say a human change is unlike all the other changes organisms undergo - just like a post-monotheist would.

"The other side of this argument is that ants are parasitized themselves by fungi in other circumstances. It causes them to alter their behavior, die and host new fungi growth. A number of stinging insects do the same. On an individual basis, that's actually a better argument for domestication than "fungi cropping" in the first half of this. But it's a short sighted attempt to make the argument, considering ants are exemplified here for propagating fungi with benefits to themselves, when taken in whole with fungi parasitizing ants that this is a symbiotic relationship."

Slow down there, KT - I can only handle so much misinformation at a time! Are you trying to say that things are somehow even-steven because ants eat fungi but fungi also eat ants? First of all, whence come these scales of justice - manipulation and domination are okay with APs after all, so long as you take turns?

But, really, the thrust of misinformation here is that the ant-infesting fungus Kevin is referencing is the *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* fungus (he probably learned about it from the *Planet Earth* documentary series), *which is an entirely different creature* from the *Lepiotaceae* fungi that the ants tend. They are not even closely related fungi, not even in the same phylum - it is literally like comparing earthworms and weasels. Moreover, the ants that the fungus infests are *entirely different ants*; this time it is like comparing badgers and weasels (a bit closer!).

What on earth is Kevin on about, anyway? Would

Kevin feel better about humans domesticating cows, chickens, and corn if there were more nonhuman primates getting eaten by random tigers, eagles, and, um...giant venus flytraps? What else can he mean by the above, by comparing vaguely related animals eating each other and saying that makes it in accordance with wildness (or something)? Kevin has no idea what he is talking about. Does Kevin believe his own answers? Maybe so - we know that years ago "the rational [...] part of [his] brain broke down"[124], and now we have the evidence. Are the owls telling him this bullshit?

"*Which gets to the second argument.*"

I am on the edge of my seat.

"*They state that the aphid relationship is not symbiotic, but then claim the ants offer them protection to the point where aphids have evolved a different pattern on their rear ends that is more likely to draw the ants in. How is that not symbiotic? They both gain.* For it to be domestication, it would have to, at the very least, favor one over the other. [emphasis added]"

Tucker has never included this element in his definitions of domestication, including his longest and most thorough definition that I quote in its entirety later. Indeed, the AP critique is based on the idea that *both* really *lose in domestication*, and that when humans domesticate, they are also domesticated, locked in codependence. Now, when he sees a quite cut-and-dry case of codependence elsewhere, he tacks on an *ad hoc* premise to rescue his thesis. One might say that the ants and aphids are mutually codependent, and that both have lost freedom that their ancestors had. The ant ancestor, after all, was independent (non-colonial) and generalist in its diet - now, it is dependent on the colony for its survival and specialist in its diet. On the flip side, one might

also say, from a Darwinian perspective, that human domesticates have gained by enormously increasing in numbers and being protected from predation and competition, losing traits they once had just as creatures often do in symbiosis. Do the individual organisms so domesticated enjoy a good quality of life? Of course not, but that is not being claimed by the definition, as Tucker himself emphasizes. But Tucker is committed to human uniqueness.

"Long story short, I think domestication is a straight forward [sic] concept"

I'm sure you do, KT.

When the author of the e-mail query challenged all of the logical wildness in KT's answers above, he added: *"In regards to the ants, if you have to dig back 12-50 million years [when the leafcutter ants started raising the fungi], I think it's safe grandfather* [sic] *that into "natural"."*

This is a bizarre, purely *ad hoc* statement. If something like our present situation continued for a certain length of time, Tucker would be okay with it because it would then be "natural"? Where is the cutoff point? Murder and rape have been around for a long time, certainly much longer than civilization.

Tucker indignantly intones, for good measure, *"And I object to the idea of anthropomorphizing insects and attributing military and industrial personas and positions to them. That is pure anthropomorphization. In terms of ant biology, they are connected on a neuron level as a whole. It has been argued that ants* [sic] *a colony of ants are [sic] itself a biological entity. That a single hive mind is actually a collective. [sic] "Personhood" is non-existent."*

Kevin means *neural*, not *neuron* - ant colonies are obviously not all connected by a single nerve cell. But he is still wrong.

Ants are not "connected on a [neural] level" any more than any other social creature; they communicate through pheromones, touch, taste, and sound. They tap on one another's bodies, emit odors one another can smell, stridulate to make sounds, and pass food and hormones to one another mouth-to-mouth. They do not have some kind of psychic, emergent hive mind like many insectile aliens from science fiction. It is obvious that Tucker knows very little about ants, but either he thinks he does or he is pretending that he does.

Tucker is probably trying to invoke the idea of *superorganisms*, an undertheorized term for collections of social organisms in which there is a sufficient division of labor that each depends on the other for survival (but I thought "There is no dependency" in the wild?!) - it does not mean they are literally one creature with one mind. Eusocial insects like ants would fall under this definition, along with many other creatures. Biologist Edward O. Wilson, arguably the world's leading expert on ants, argues that humans are eusocial, just like ants, so Kevin had better be careful about the implications of the terms he invokes. Regardless, there is personhood among ants, and no amount of sneer quoting by Kevin Tucker is going to change that. What follows are some general statements about ants that are found in a variety of species.

Ants do not all work together in perfect unity - individuals plainly exhibit anti-social behavior. Many ants slack off. Many do it some of the time, and some do it very much of the time - there is variation because, yes, individual insects have personalities. Amusingly, the ants that slack off also live longer lives, presumably by not taxing themselves. What is more, the slackers are *policed* (this is actually the term used by biologists) by other ants, who violently coerce them into getting back to work.

Other ants are reproductively deviant. Although queens perform nearly all of the reproduction in colonies,

the majority of a colony's ants, being female, are capable of giving birth. These deviants will cloister themselves in a less-traveled area of the colony to breed covertly. If found by their fellows, the punishment can be brutal - genital mutilation - to ensure it cannot happen again.

Queens and other high-ranking ants play politics, trying to exploit the social group for their individual gain. Ants routinely feed and communicate with one another by soliciting and offering *trophallaxis* - the mutual exchange of regurgitated liquids containing food and communicative hormones - ants that do not typically leave the nest, like the queen, are fed almost exclusively in this manner. Like a savvy monarch, the queen checks the power of her nobility by preferentially soliciting trophallaxis from the highest-ranking females, thus decreasing their food resources and capacity to challenge her position. In ants with linear hierarchies, dominance is established through ritualized (non-lethal) combat, and lower-ranking ants are fed less often and forced to do more dangerous tasks, like scouting - at the same time, high-ranking females are more able and likely to contribute their energy to deviant reproduction.

Even more starkly, some ants literally enslave other ant populations. Known as dulotic ants - from the Greek *doulos*, meaning "slave", thus "slave-making ants" - they are *social parasites*, creatures that live by exploiting the social behavior of other creatures. Dulotic ant queens invade their hosts' nests and deceive them through "propaganda" (again, this is the biologists' term, not mine) pheromones, killing the original queen and duping the workers through further pheromones into serving her and her offspring. Here, ideology is propagated through memes. The dulotic ants perform none of the foraging, nest maintenance, or brood care, being labored for entirely by the slave population – their only task is to launch further slave raids. Occasionally, the slaves realize what is going on and "rebel" (again, the biolo-

gists' term) by mass slaughtering the slave offspring they had been caring for, though they are seemingly inevitably overcome by their enslavers, making it a suicide mission for the sake of their kin. Notably, dulotic ants are not a particular species of ant or even a particular genus (group of closely related species), meaning the enslaving behavior has evolved numerous times independently.[125]

Thus, numerous creatures other than humans practice various forms of codependent, manipulation-based relationships with creatures other than themselves. I focused on ants here, but termites do something quite similar with a different type of fungus, and it has even been suggested that the fungus communicates - or manipulates - the termites through chemical signaling; and other insects, shrimp, and even naked mole rats have similar hierarchical, violence-based social structures with reproduction isolated in queens, and occasionally "kings".

Kevin complains that "the biologists doing most of the studying are coming from that same 'selfish gene' perspective".[126] Maybe - the Dawkins perspective he is referring to is highly influential, for sure, but I am unaware of any study of just how influential. Certainly, a number of famous and influential biologists have challenged this paradigm, like Stephen Jay Gould, Lynn Margulis, and E. O. Wilson. What E. O. Wilson believes is not in the 'selfish gene' paradigm, but that evolution is working on multiple levels, not just at the gene level - so there are ways, for instance, of being fit and having selection act on the species level rather than the gene level. So, with the above examples, the subjugation of individuals may allow the species to flourish. Evolution does not tend toward the quality of life of the individual or even the collective - it tends toward *propagation*. So, when changes happen that make life shitty for individual humans - even most individual humans - individual ants, or individual ant or human domesticates, that does not mean

that it is not part of evolution.

Domestication is not acting against evolution - it is part of evolution. That does not mean we have to like it, want it, accept it, or respect it - only the confused perspective of a post-monotheistic slave ideology would lead one to think that way. It also does not mean that resisting domestication or domestication going away are not or would not be also part of evolution. When I tried to say that domestication is part of evolution in an online forum, Tucker balked and guffawed and wrote a semi-coherent diatribe full of logical fallacies telling me how stupid I am - because, for him, this is tantamount to saying domestication is good, or at least something not worth criticizing or resisting. It is not saying that; I was not saying that. But Kevin does not or cannot accept these things, firstly because he thinks we need to be on the side of some Absolute in order for our lives and our resistance to the dominant paradigm to be meaningful or even worth doing in the first place, and secondly because he does not understand evolution.

"Wildness is *our* genetic state"[127] is Tucker's credo, the core of his case for anarchy on a basis of human nature and evolution. Put simply, Tucker believes that because 99% of our species' time on this planet has been as gatherer-hunters who were effectively anarchists (which, we will see, is not as uncontroversial as he claims it is), and because civilization is a proportionally small, recent deviation from that, then - *handwave-handwave* - it follows that we ought to all be anarchists because it is our human nature to be so.

Is anarchy inherently in our nature? Sure, but only in the tautological sense that it is something that we have done, do in some ways now, and can do in the future. Anarchy is no more our fate, destiny, or how we are, as Tucker

is fond of saying, *meant to be*, any more than any other way humans have lived. But Kevin thinks it is something more than that, something essentially and irrevocably human.

A partially hidden premise for this argument is the assertion that we have not changed genetically in the past 11,000ish years since civilization began. Tucker sometimes implies this and sometimes asserts this explicitly, as when "We are born physically and mentally for a life of nomadic gathering and hunting"[128]

But humans *have* evolved in that time - no creature *stops* evolving when its environment changes. Believing humans are not and have not evolved of late is just another AP way to pretend we are not like other creatures. Since the migration from Africa, humans have evolved a diversity of skin and skeletal structures that became reified as *race*, probably in part due to different diets and climates.[129] Humans have evolved to get more nutrition out of their tremendously changed agricultural diets.[130] And some biologists have argued that the advent of agriculture accelerated evolution by placing enormous new selective pressures in the form of a radically new diet, new disease risks, and larger and more complex social groups. They suggest we have even changed significantly cognitively in the past several centuries in response to the pressures of civilized life.[131]

Genetic arguments, like arguments based on human nature, can cut just about any way you want - which is why I consider them weak, easily-refuted arguments that are best avoided altogether in critical theory. One could say that we were *meant to be* gatherer-hunters before; but, now that we have evolved since then, we are now *meant to be* agricultural urbanists. Émile Durkheim used evolution to argue that the industrial division of labor was nothing to worry about - people would adapt to the new circumstances![132] If some biologists are right, it is already happening.

Moreover, if anarchy is something that is baked into

humans, part of our nature, then civilization is assuredly as well. Taking the biological view that Kevin is trying to take, insofar as we understand an organism's genome as its toolkit, then all of its behaviors flow from different combinations and applications of this toolkit - it cannot *not use* its genome or *act against* its genome. Saying that we ought to stop the civilized way of life because it is *against our nature* and that *wildness is our genetic state* is like telling dulotic ants that they should stop enslaving and living colonially because their ancestors did not do those things.

Of course, when people make arguments that they say are our *human nature*, what they almost always really mean is *Hey, I think some of these things we do are good and some are really shitty, and we should do more of the good things and fewer of the shit ones* - but they think only reified value is real value, so they pretend that we have an inviolable, fixed core nature that is the *true human*. They cannot explain why this inviolable, fixed core seems awfully easy to violate and not at all fixed.

In the famous-but-actually-kinda-boring debate between Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault and his later commentaries on it, Chomsky tries to base his case for a core of human nature on the fact that in the past several decades, we have supposedly seen a convergence of moral values around the world (he uses the example of the supposedly increased tolerance of homosexuality). He means liberal democratic values, though he does not call them those - he also does not acknowledge that those values were in many cases pushed on people through conquest, exploitative economic relationships, and mass media. He also does not acknowledge the ways in which homosexuality has been differently expressed, perceived, and accepted at various points throughout history, such as in Classical Rome or the early Islamic Empire, only to be rejected and punished in civilizations directly descended from those ones. Chomsky's evi-

dence is not very convincing. Tucker bases his claim for an essential human nature on a supposed original unity of human values and behaviors. He does not explain why humans have changed so dramatically from that original point, and, as we shall see, his evidence is not very convincing, either.

If *human nature* means anything really sensible, it means that all of the things we like and do not like are part of our nature, love and kindness as well as abuse and rape - the latter are there because nasty and manipulative behaviors, whether we like it or not, help people to survive and reproduce just like generosity and honesty do.

If civilization were not part of our nature, our genetics, APs would be committed to saying that civilization came to humans out of nowhere, as though by a supernatural force. They occasionally do seem to say something like this or close to this, as when we somehow act against *wildness* or how we are *meant to be*, or when a "cosmic change" occurred with domestication. But, given the veracity of the ancient dictum *ex nihilo, nihilo fit* - out of nothing, nothing comes - it must be the case that humans have always had the potential, and actuality, to be civilizers.

Tucker is *weakening* the argument for anarchy by basing it genetically. It is easy to disprove. But Tucker believes it because it fits with his reified conception of evolution.

Tucker believes in teleological evolution: an evolution that, rather than being blind, chaotic, and flailing, throwing mutations at the wall to see which ones stick; is instead purposive, as though a depersonified intelligence (wildness?) were directing it carefully, cautiously, and methodically, like building a house of cards that might fall down.

Tucker repeatedly refers to "millions of years" of evolution in his writing (it is actually billions, not millions):

"we can and should never think we are capable of redoing what the earth shaped over millions of years"[133], or we are "throwing away millions of years of adaptation and existence"[134]. Tucker seems to believe that the biosphere has been gradually working toward a perfected point, some kind of stasis or at least stability, and that a legacy of "millions" of years of effort is behind it.

Tucker eschews "philosophical bullshit", and he is again recapitulating old mistakes. In the mid-19th century, some biologists, who were influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of Natural Selection but could not quite accept its radical implications, clung to a view of evolution tending toward greater complexity, achieving more beautiful and sophisticated forms through descent. Like Tucker, they had problems dealing with counter-examples, such as the fact that parasites, in the course of coevolving with their hosts, commonly *lose* features that their ancestors had that they no longer need or that they effectively hijack from their hosts, such as limbs, sensory organs, or digestive systems. How could the teleologists account for this? By declaring parasitism, in the words of one of these biologists, *"one of the gravest crimes in nature. It is a breach of the law of Evolution. Thou shalt evolve, thou shalt develop all thy faculties to the full, thou shalt attain to the highest conceivable perfection of thy race -- and so perfect thy race -- this is the first and greatest commandment of Nature. But the parasite has no thought for its race, or for its perfection in any shape or form. It wants two things -- food and shelter. How it gets them is of no moment. Each member lives exclusively on its own account, an isolated, indolent, selfish, and backsliding life."*[135]

One can violate the laws of evolution, and one can therefore sin against Nature! Famed biologists Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Lewontin satirized this point of view by comparing such teleologists to Voltaire's fictional character Professor

Pangloss, who maintained, against all evidence, that we live "in the best of all possible worlds." Gould and Lewontin have been careful to note that evolution does not in any way assure that creatures are as well-adapted as possible to their environments, only that they are *relatively* well-adapted in comparison to other forms that have come about in the flux of the biosphere.[136]

Meanwhile, Tucker lambasts civilized humans for breeding creatures for desired traits, "This is a human controlled attempt at adaptivity: we can never replicate evolution, but we have certainly tried."[137] But Kevin thinks we can do something even more supernatural than replicate natural cycles - he thinks we can escape them, and have escaped them. He thinks we have committed "a breach of the law of Evolution".

For Tucker, it is as though Nature were a conscious, purposive watchmaker, who had labored diligently and carefully for billions of years to find a place for everything and everything in its right place, where everything happens for a reason in this best of all possible worlds. Then along strolls the human - again, somehow implicitly outside of this process, the one *causa sui* - who, like an impish, short-sighted child, mucks about with the slow and careful plan. Kevin's understanding of evolution is stuck in the mid-19th century. Tucker cannot accept that evolution does not create the best of all possible creatures or the best of all possible balances among those creatures - it is blind, chaotic, and it periodically creates catastrophes.

Tucker does not believe anything *really* negative can happen except when it is done by human beings. In his essay "The Creation of Disaster", he complains, "Every time a 'disaster' [sneer!] [...] occurs, we treat it as if nature has done

us wrong", when the destruction is only *apparent* destruction. Tucker's assertion is that all natural disasters are really human disasters - they would not be disasters if we had not built the civilized infrastructure that is destroyed by them.

Assuredly, Tucker is correct to say that much of civilized human activity is foolish and self-sabotaging - at the most basic levels, the agricultural system is anti-ecological, creating drudge work, necessitating massive energy inputs, and destroying habitat. And, as Tucker points out, civilized human settlements are frequently built in ways that are at odds with their habitat and thus set humans up for suffering and death. If Tucker were only making these points, I would agree with him - but, as usual, it is not enough for Tucker to argue for his values, he needs to believe that an essential force of the universe is on his side.

Here is his next metaphysical adventure:
"The cycles of nature are built upon a balance, which has kept the natural world functioning for its millions [sic] of years of existence. They are unpredictable and chaotic. They will never come and go in the same way, or even have the same individual effects. The only thing they will do for sure is catalyze the life cycles of all living things."[138]

In this best of all possible worlds, everything works for the betterment and flourishing of life - except for those damned "domesticators", causing mass extinction or, as Tucker once claimed, possibly the total annihilation of life. Just what is the matter with them?

We are popularly said to be in the sixth mass extinction of the Earth, but it is more accurately the seventh, as there have been six before. What are the implications of the fact that there have been six before humans, or anything much like humans, existed? Life periodically kills itself back quite heavily - to put it metaphorically, as paleontologist Peter Ward has, we do not live on Gaia, the mother of life who

loves and tends to all of her children, but instead Medea, who has children and later decides to kill them.

The mass extinctions were respectively about 66 million years ago (the dinosaur one that everyone knows about), 200 million years ago, 250 million years ago, 375 million years ago, 450 million years ago, and 2.3 billion years ago. Life has been around for maybe about 4.2 billion (not "millions of") years. It complexified into the first multicellular forms - basically colonies of microorganisms - about 3.5 billion years ago, and then into most the forms we commonly think of (animals, plants, and the like) about 542 million years ago. There was only one mass extinction in the very long period when life was unicellular organisms. As life became more complex, it became more prone to fucking up and falling apart, as one might expect from a blind, chaotic system. The higher it builds itself, the more likely it is to stumble and fall to pieces.

These mass extinctions were probably caused by, variously, combinations of volcanism, meteor impacts, global climate changes, or the exposure of life to new chemical conditions that were toxic to its particular constitution at that time. The first mass extinction was probably caused by the metabolism of the first photosynthetic organisms, cyanobacteria, who filled first the oceans and then the atmosphere with oxygen for the first time, poisoning most other lifeforms and causing the Earth to enter one of its *snowball Earth* stages, with partially-frozen oceans. The third mass extinction may have been partially caused by the first trees: they broke rock into soil on an unprecedented scale, causing eutrophication in the waters around them as nutrients suddenly flooded into waterways; and they may have caused a great global cooling brought on by removing a huge amount of carbon dioxide from the air. The fourth and largest mass extinction, called the Great Dying, in which an astonishing 96% of all marine species and over 70% of terrestrial verte-

brate species went extinct and after which it may have taken as long as ten million years for biodiversity to recover, was probably caused in part by a dramatic global warming from archaea (bacteria-like creatures) who shit methane.

How do Zerzan and Tucker's conceptions of nature and wildness jive with these empirical facts? It is most certainly not the case that "The only thing [the cycles of nature] will do for sure is catalyze the life cycles of all living things." Sometimes they do, and sometimes they do not. The world grows a layer of flesh on itself, gets itchy, and then claws it off in a bloody mess. It is more Azathoth than it is Gaia, or even Jehovah. It does not tend toward the Good, the balanced, or the orderly. It is not something to treat as a transcendental signifier.

We are the harbingers of the seventh mass extinction: we are like the volcanism, the snowball earth, the meteor, the cyanobacteria, or the methanogenic archaea. It is not a pretty picture, and it is not a reason to abandon radicalism and embrace a passive nihilism. But it is also nothing unnatural, nothing that has not come before; it is not the *kairos* in an otherwise unbroken, orderly pattern that the APs want it to be so that they can raise a flag.

The valorized nature, wildness, or cycles of nature of AP are presented as concrete or even scientific, but they are just another dreamed-up post-monotheist abstraction. The APs will sometimes posture at being hard-boiled realists, but their value system is based on cherry-picking, obfuscation, and misinformation.

If wildness is the inherent connection among all living beings, then how can that connection ever be severed? If even in brutal acts of subjugation and manipulation among nonhumans there is wildness or the morally sound character of animality, then why would the wildness and righteousness dissipate in similar acts by humans? If other creatures have brought on mass extinctions, then why is

our activity unnatural, "a cosmic change", or not how "we were meant to be"? The APs cannot answer these questions, but their critics can. It is because the human, once again, is presented as *causa sui*, the architect of fate, the historical protagonist - it is because AP is an anthropocentric world-view, just as its ancestors were and contemporaries are.

There are far better reasons - ones that do not enter into the realm of slave ideology, abstracted value systems, and *ad hoc* theoretical gymnastics - to condemn this crisis we find ourselves in than by pretending humans are singular in their tendency to develop exploitative, co-dependent relationships with their fellows or with other species or engage in ecocidal behavior, and that therefore our crisis is against the universal value of wildness or nature, and that we ought therefore to be objectively on the side of the *unum*, *bonum*, and *verum*. Fuck that millennia-old trash and its post-monotheist slave morality.



One of the main ways APs demarcate their conception of anarchism from that of others is by couching it within anthropology. Their claims in this respect are, of course, closely related to those of human nature addressed above, and some of the same criticisms apply. But they are also importantly different in some dimensions.

As a caveat to this section, to be clear, I agree with the APs that there is much of value for anarchists, both practically and inspirationally, in the anthropological data on peoples who have lived or do live in dramatically different ways from how we do now. There is the basic fact that people have lived very different ways successfully for immense periods of time, itself an enormous implicit critique of the status quo. And there is much to admire and learn from, to take just a few examples, the anti-hierarchical social habits of peoples like

the Mbuti or !Kung or the subsistence strategies of forest-tending peoples in the northeastern US. So, when APs make the general claim that it is very worth our while to learn from indigenous peoples, I agree with them - I agree with most of what Tucker says in his essay "Anarchy and Anthropology", for instance. But, as usual, the APs leap from careful and reasonable claims to fantastic and fallacious ones.

APs are highly prone to make general claims that gatherer-hunter life in the past, present, and possible future was, is, and would be the ideal for anarchist life. In this case, they mean *anarchist* not only in the narrow sense of the absence of a state, but also in the sense of being in accordance with modern anarchist/Humanist values: a sharing and gift-based economy, absence of patriarchy, acceptance of queer forms of gender and sexuality, respect and empathy toward nonhumans, an ethic of conservation, abundant leisure, and so forth. Their consistent claim is that the mainstream consensus of anthropology supports these claims.

One of Zerzan's best-known essays, "Future Primitive", makes probably the strongest case for this in terms of citing evidence and expresses the quintessential AP position: *"This ideological view of our past [as poor, nasty, brutish, and short in primitive hardship] has been radically overturned in recent decades, through the work of academics like Richard Lee and Marshall Sahlins. A nearly complete reversal in anthropological orthodoxy has come about, with important implications. Now we can see that life before domestication/agriculture was in fact largely one of leisure, intimacy with nature, sensual wisdom, sexual equality, and health. This was our human nature, for a couple of million years, prior to enslavement by priests, kings, and bosses."*[139]

"Future Primitive" is heavily cited, though it contains no bibliography and cites only by authors' last names and years of publication - this omission makes it more dif-

ficult to notice the cherry-picking, as we shall see.

At other times, the APs have been even less circumspect about their evidence. In his public debate with Zoltan Istvan at Stanford University, Zerzan flatly claimed that anyone could open an anthropology textbook and see that he was right - a claim, we will see, that is not only vague but demonstrably false. Tucker's *For Wildness and Anarchy*, in which some of the essays have no citations at all, is full of extremely generalized claims of how gatherer-hunter life is, was, and could be one of "primal anarchy" - essentially one of band societies whose values accord with modern anarchist/Humanist values - including sweeping claims about millennia of prehistory. Most of the book's cited claims are actually about negative phenomena occurring in transitions to or states of horticulture, whereas the the essays more involved with discussing how lovely affairs ostensibly were under "primal anarchy"[140] are simply asserted.

Occasionally, Zerzan in particular makes bizarre, quasi-supernatural claims not obviously supported by any evidence, such as the total absence of disease among primitive people or their capacity for telepathy. In most cases, however, APs rely heavily on the work of the anthropologists Marshall Sahlins, Richard Borshay Lee, Colin Turnbull, James Woodburn, Stanley Diamond, and Jared Diamond, in particular focusing on the paradigm shift in anthropology during the 1966 Man the Hunter conference from viewing primitive life as one of deprivation to viewing it as one of "original affluence".

What I have never seen either Tucker or Zerzan engage with or even acknowledge is that the original affluence paradigm created by the work of Sahlins and Lee was short-lived and eventually discarded as a simplistic inversion of the old stereotype. As anthropologist Robert L. Kelly notes, the primitive affluence model was "soon [...] dismantled, for the very research it inspired [...] rapidly produc[ed] informa-

tion for which it could not account." Sahlins' claims about very low amounts of time spent on subsistence were quickly discarded and discredited, as it was revealed that some of the data he presented, from Lee's work, never accounted for time spent processing food, and that in one case he extrapolated from data from a highly contrived observation in which foragers were goaded into participating. Moreover, the generalized claims about affluence have not been borne out by the data, as even, *"Members of that quintessential affluent society, the Ju/'hoansi [!Kung], 'are very thin and complain often of hunger, at all times of the year. It is likely that hunger is a contributing cause to many deaths which are immediately caused by infectious and parasitic diseases, even though it is rare for anyone simply to starve to death."'* Kelly's overall thesis in his book *The Foraging Spectrum* is that both the Hobbesian stereotype of brutal impoverishment and the Sahlins-Lee stereotype of original affluence and egalitarianism must be eschewed, that foraging lifeways are diverse socially and hierarchically, and that there is no quintessential gatherer-hunter type, past or present.[141]

Zerzan and Tucker, as readers of anthropology, are presumably aware of this change in the mainstream anthropological consensus. In fact, the change had happened *before* Zerzan wrote "Future Primitive"! But they do not mention it, even to challenge or reject the shift away from a paradigm of original affluence and egalitarianism among foragers. As of 2014, Tucker was tabling with a zine version of Sahlins' "The Original Affluent Society" and Zerzan was making public speeches saying that gatherer-hunters who practice no domestication experience no illness. APs have made their detestation of the dismissal of their position by other radicals as being predicated on a myth of the Noble Savage clear repeatedly - and, to be fair, many of these dismissals of AP *are* cheap and canned - but they invite this dismissal on themselves by cherry-picking their evidence.

Theodore Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber after his alleged participation in high-profile murder and attempted murder of prominent technologists by mail-bombing, has written an essay called "The Truth About Primitive Life" in reply to some of these under-evidenced AP claims. Drawing on both anthropological literature and his own experience with foraging wild foods and practicing primitive skills, he both valorizes primitive life as superior to modernity *and* deflates the idea that it is, was, or would be the kind of Humanist paradise Zerzan and Tucker envision. Kaczynski systematically addresses claims regarding gender relations, rape, violence, egalitarianism, sharing and generosity, institutional hierarchy, empathy toward nonhumans, conservation of the biosphere, and others, in each case quite thoroughly bringing into doubt the generalized, positive claims made by Zerzan and Tucker while maintaining that there are admirable and desirable aspects of primitive lifeways.

I am aware of only one brief and off-the-cuff AP response to Kaczynski's thoroughgoing essay, in which Zerzan critiqued Kaczynski by complaining of one way in which the latter had allegedly misrepresented information from a source regarding a particular sexual taboo of a particular people.[142] Given the numerous arguments Kaczynski makes and the many sources he draws on, this reply falls well short of a refutation. Kaczynski also notes that he attempted direct dialogue with Zerzan to work out their disagreement, but that Zerzan was, *"vague and evasive. I would gladly publish here Zerzan's letters to me on this subject so that the reader could judge them for himself. However, I wrote to Zerzan requesting permission to publish his letters, and he denied me that permission."*

He goes on to describe Zerzan's defense of his claims as involving extreme cherry-picking, not only in his choice of sources but also *within* sources, where he ignores descriptions of things like patriarchal violence among foragers.

"I questioned his honesty on the ground that he had 'systematically excluded nearly all of the evidence...that undercuts the idealized picture of hunter-gatherer societies' that he wanted to present. Zerzan answered that he 'did not find many credible sources' that contradicted his outlook. This statement strains credulity. Some of the examples that I cited to Zerzan (and have discussed above) were from books on which he himself had relies [sic] *—those of Bonvillain and Turnbull. Yet he somehow managed to overlook all of the evidence in those books that contradicted his claims. Since Zerzan has read widely about hunter-gatherer societies, and since the Australian Aborigines are among the best-known hunter-gatherers, I find it very difficult to believe that he has never come across any accounts of the Australians' mistreatment of women. Yet he never mentions such accounts—not even for the purpose of refuting them. One does not necessarily have to assume any conscious dishonesty on Zerzan's part. As Nietzsche said, 'The most common lie is the lie one tells to oneself; lying to others is relatively the exception.'"*[143]

Kaczynski's stories entirely accord with my experiences of debating with Zerzan, which have been characterized by similar misrepresentation, cheap dismissal, and what appears to be a fairly high level of either conscious dishonesty or willed delusion. I am inclined to agree with Kaczynski that it is likely the latter, that the APs have fallen in love with their ideas and are now too entrenched, after years of fleshing out and defending their minority-within-a-minority position, to allow themselves doubt.

Tucker has cited anthropologist James Woodburn's distinction between immediate-return and delayed-return societies - that is, those who consume the fruits of their labor

more or less immediately versus those who create stored surpluses - as "the greatest contribution to understanding the variations of gatherer-hunter societies." He uses it to distinguish between gatherer-hunters with surplus, whom he admits have some of the trappings of civilization (hierarchy, slavery, and the like), and the immediate-return gatherer-hunters, who have "[...] the most egalitarian societies to ever exist and typify historically, pre-historically, and contemporarily what I call 'primal anarchy'".[144] Recalling the section on domestication above, the APs have regularly dismissed examples of hierarchy, slavery, and brutality among gatherer-hunters by referencing some practice of domestication among them, which I have characterized as a notion of spiritual pollution, a kind of violation with the covenant of Nature or wildness. More recently, they have drawn this second distinction of stored surplus. Peoples without any domestication or stored surplus, then, ought to be the true AP primal anarchists, uncorrupted.

An example of these primal anarchists, by Tucker's definition, would be the Mbuti. But according to an anthropologist often cited by APs, Colin Turnbull, the Mbuti show signs of having a quite clearly patriarchal society in which wifebeating is seemingly routine, as when one man expressed "[...] that he was very content with his wife, and he had not found it necessary to beat her at all often."[145], or when an old man remarks, "Perhaps he should have beaten her harder [...] for some girls like being beaten." Again, according to Turnbull, the Mbuti sanction date-rape, as, "The men say that once they lie down with a girl [...] if they want her they take her by surprise, when petting her, and force her to their will."[146] Turnbull also describes episodes where Mbuti seem to be tormenting nonhuman animals for their amusement. I am unaware of either Zerzan or Tucker addressing these behaviors and values among what would seem to be one of the very few peoples who could meet

their highly specific definition of "primal anarchy".

Again, to me, it seems clear that the AP reductionist attempt to find an original fault line, a supposedly singular flip from an anarchist form of life to a non-anarchist one - whether by *domestication* or more recently by stored surplus - will never quite yield. Though I applaud the effort of investigating the possible origins of domination, it is also hard not to see in the APs a half-conscious effort of first believing in a primal anarchy because of exposure to Sahlins and Lee's work, then finding objectionable non-anarchist values and behaviors among gatherer-hunters, and subsequently defining *true primitiveness* more and more narrowly in a desire to find an uncorrupted, essentially good human nature lurking underneath all of the misery. It may be that no group really fits the bill. This extremely specific definition of a primitive ideal also raises major thorns when it comes to praxis, as we shall see in the next section.

Even the most basic claims in AP are not part of the mainstream anthropological consensus as they present them to be. Despite the often-mentioned-but-rarely-cited AP claim that gatherer-hunter life constitutes 99% of human time on Earth, it has been contested that as much as 10% of *Homo sapiens* life history may have involved sedentism and farming.[147] Against the AP claim that extremely egalitarian peoples like the Ju/'hoansi or the Mbuti are representatives of an essential lifeway and ethos that reflects human nature and the long and deep human past, critiques have been raised that those model forager societies are in fact not reflective of the past[148] and may be extremely unusual, relatively recently developed societies.[149] Correspondingly, increasing evidence for inegalitarian forager societies predates the Neolithic Revolution.[150] Against the AP cultural materialist analysis that claims social struc-

tures largely arise out of means of subsistence, it has been argued that traditional Amerindian social structures were not thusly correlated with subsistence, leading one anthropologist to conclude that "social complexity [i.e., hierarchy and State-forms] is completely uncorrelated with agriculture or proto-agriculture"[151]; and that moreover social ideas and ideology do not necessarily change when subsistence changes.[152] Woodburn's immediate-return versus delayed-return distinction, which Tucker has called "the greatest contribution to understanding the variations of gatherer-hunter societies"[153], has come under fire due to evident counter-examples.[154] Paralleling my longtime complaint about AP's Sorites Problem with trying to make a hard distinction between domestication and foraging, some anthropologists have rejected the notion that "hunter-gatherer" is even a distinct category[155] - perhaps Tucker thinks they are just "pontificating" or engaging in "philosophical bullshit" as well.

As a final caveat, I want to emphasize that my point with the above is *not* to say that there is nothing admirable or worth emulating in gatherer-hunter cultures - far from it! What we can see - and thus what we know humans are capable of doing well - is a reduction or even annihilation of the work/play and work/leisure dichotomies, face-to-face community in small and intimate groups, and conflict resolution through mediation and non-binding arbitration. There is an absence of experts and an abundance of persons who have all the skills they need for life. These are surely anarchist values. But the APs make an enormous leap from the undeniable claim that there are values and lifeways worth examining and emulating among gatherer-hunters to saying that they lived in millennia of primal anarchy and that we can return to this essential anarchist human condition only

and precisely by becoming foragers ourselves.

On a theoretical level, the brief record of anthropology surveyed above that contests or even specifically denounces the AP paradigm of anthropology is sufficient to at least seriously weaken if not decidedly undermine the core AP thesis: that anarchy is gatherer-hunting and gatherer-hunting is anarchy. On the level of the APs as writers, all of the above means Tucker and Zerzan are either shockingly ignorant of what has been going on in anthropology for the past fifty-one years since Man the Hunter, which is difficult to believe; or that, consciously or not, they have misrepresented the evidence through cherry-picking and omission for about two decades now. They have tortured the data to fit the theory rather than let the theory emerge from the data.

On a personal level, I find this behavior extremely disappointing and frustrating. I have met or communicated with numerous young anarchists who have uncritically swallowed Zerzan and Tucker's thesis, assuming that what they say about anthropology is true without ever looking into the original literature themselves. I imagine this phenomenon is common, especially given Zerzan's fairly frequent public speaking stints.

As is typical of ideologues, the APs spout exaggerations and half-truths; when challenged, they become angry, demonize their critics, and spout more falsehoods. They tell a story of a lost Golden Age that could come again after a period of blood and fire, and that an Absolute force of nature/wildness/human nature/evolution is on their side in achieving this goal. An anti-civilization anarchist praxis can only be mislead by such a slave ideology - and this is, in fact, what happens with AP.

Whither the Future Primitive?: Anarcho-Primitivism and Praxis

AP is, in Tucker's words, a "critique with implications"[156]

and not a blueprint.[157] Both Tucker and Zerzan have addressed that quintessential radical's question *What is to be done?* only in cautious and open-ended ways, including when asked very directly.[158] Probably in part because of this obliqueness about praxis, the APs have been critiqued for articulating an impracticable theory.[159]

I feel some of this scorn is undeserved. Achieving the radically decentralized way of life that the anti-civilization critique implies entails creating an incredible diversity of cultures, each creating and created by its landbase, the likes of which has not been seen on this planet for millennia. As beautiful as it could be, it is an immense change, orders of magnitude greater than that called for by either the politically Left-wing or Right-wing forms of anarchism. It is preposterous to think that one could lay out a procedure that would be applicable to the life of anyone with a similar vision, since everyone interested has different talents, interests, opportunities, and constraints depending on who and where they are. More than that, as the APs themselves have noted, the very methodology of putting out a generalized program is itself likely to recapitulate centralization, standardization, and authority. Politically Left-wing and Right-wing varieties of anarchism, comfortable with certain forms of standardization, centralization, and authority, may be able to put out such procedures. But there is no real ground for saddling AP - or any anti-civilization critique - with the albatross of needing to give a somehow specific yet universally applicable program. Tucker, who says more about praxis than Zerzan, has made it clear that AP praxis can look like many different things for various people in diverse locations, and he is at his most reasonable when he does so.[160]

But on occasions when the APs do get more specific about what they are for and against, they enter into confusion and contradiction, and it then *does* seem that they do offer a semi-prescriptive but incoherent praxis. We will

examine this in terms of AP comments on so-called "insurrectionary subsistence", the question of violence, and seeming Humanistic residues regarding reaching *The People*.

Insurrectionary subsistence is a term that has become popular among anarchists in recent years. I first encountered the term in the book *Land and Freedom: An Open Invitation* by Seaweed[161], though it has probably been around before that. Though Seaweed's book strikes me as somewhat confused and was off-putting in some places, and though I do not use the term myself, the general idea of anarchists dropping out of dependence on the economy for survival to pursue autonomous subsistence in ways that move away from agriculture and toward regenerative, mutualistic relationships with their landbases is something that I find exciting and worthwhile. Tucker has also indicated his interest in such a tactic in multiple places.[162]

Taking up Tucker's endorsement of Woodburn's distinction of egalitarian societies predicated on immediate- versus delayed-return again, Tucker has indicated in several ways that he thinks such a subsistence strategy is the only one worth pursuing. He questions why anyone would attempt horticulture when it is (seemingly falsely asserted, given the above evidence, to be) necessarily connected to a less free way of life.[163] He asserts inexplicably that, "A garden is invasive. Especially a garden that takes the plants that we know now. [sic]"[164], and so cultivation ought to be avoided. In fact, even attempting to understand ecology and participate in the creation of ecosystems is, "an insult to the complexity of socio-ecological relationships and evolved symbiosis".[165] We are outsiders, meant only to appreciate the resplendence of nature.

His own efforts have adhered to these principles, "The

only planting I've ever done was to encourage native pollinators personally[,] and I've seen massive changes from it. They know better than we do." Again, Tucker evinces his idea of a human who is only a guest and appreciator of the habitat, not a participant, not a cocreator. Responding to the observation that human-initiated fires in certain situations might prevent disease among serviceberry trees, Tucker replies, "[...] that's not an argument that humans need to be starting fires, but that humans need to stop intervening when wildfires would be coming through. It's a gardener and innately religious-stewardship notion[!] that we need to control that situation."[166]

At the same time, he says, "I'm not a fan of spending time thinking about what the future may hold or what exactly will happen once civilization collapses[,] as it surely will."[167] He calls essentially for learning how to become a forager and, upon the collapse of civilization, be it anarchist-assisted or otherwise, leaping back into a gatherer-hunter way of life in a post-civilized world.[168] To me, this is an overall incoherent worldview that leaves one almost paralyzed when it comes to pursuing subsistence and ignores the reality of our present ecological situation.

In my very first communication with Tucker, about four years ago, we got around to talking about uncivilizing forms of subsistence as praxis, and I was surprised to find him flatly rejecting the possibility of what I was then calling "feral permaculture" - which I have more lately, in the perhaps futile effort to find unproblematic terminology, taken to calling forest gardening or the recreation of human and nonhuman habitat. I stressed to him that I probably agreed with his critiques of permaculture, specifically the way in which many of its practitioners and exponents want to apply it industrially and at a mass scale, with the idea of perpetually managing the creatures around oneself in a supposedly more benign way, with the ultimate goal, of course, being the same old rescuing civilization through sustainability. Tucker is absolutely correct

to say that many permaculturalists have hideous, messianic intentions and display quintessential green liberal naïveté. I rejected that slightly-darker-than-light-green brand of reformist nonsense then just as I do now. I emphasized to Tucker that what I was talking about was the idea of cautious, less-is-more, highly-considered human intervention in ecosystems in the short- to medium-term with the idea of increasing biodiversity, species richness, and resilience to climate change while allowing for gradual withdrawal from dependence on the State and economy for survival. These forest gardens, I stressed, would be gradually less and less intervened with until they were realized as ultimately unmanaged and mildly tended, self-sustaining ecosystems. I noted that he had said it was worthwhile to "spread native seeds", and that I saw a major place for native plants in what I was talking about.[169] Tucker wrote back that he understood what I meant, but still disagreed completely – he is "against transition states."

Tucker's vision leaves us in a nigh-impossible situation, and I am moved to think his self-description of not being interested in thinking too much about post-collapse scenarios is leading to magical thinking and dogma. Anything that looks too much like managing, or even tending, entails crossing into the realm of sacred contagion that leaves us out of touch with wildness and on the road to reproducing authority and and civilization. Storing food means exiting the realm of immediate-return and shuts off the possibility of "primal anarchy".

But we are living in the period of defaunation and defoliation, with species disappearing at mass extinction levels. North American forests are dying from climate change even when they are not being cut. The current agricultural systems are looking increasingly fragile.[170] It is difficult to imagine, in these conditions of catastrophic ecocide, many places where one could *actually survive* strictly from foraging - even where I am lucky enough to live, around substantial areas of rela-

tively healthy forest, this would be next to impossible.

The idea of not storing surplus is particularly worth examination. I am certainly not as well-read as Tucker in anthropology, but it seems quite obviously non-coincidental that the few peoples who would meet his most stringent definition of primal anarchy (gatherer-hunters who never store food) - such as the Ju/'hoansi (!Kung), the Hadza, and the Mbuti - all live in tropical climates, where food is available for foraging year-round. What is one to do in areas with long and harsh winters, such as where I live and where Tucker lives, if one does not store food? Could healthy anarchist relations really survive in conditions of eating only recently-obtained meat, the few remaining acorns buried under a foot or two of snow, and the inner bark of trees for three to five months, living in misery and likely contracting degenerative diseases from malnourishment?

The people who inhabited the land where I live were doing forest gardening before contact; they were decidedly not existing in the purest of foraging states of which Tucker approves. Their forests - which were carefully tended for generations, which increased in biodiversity through their tending, and which some European colonists perceived as a wild and edenic land of plenty[171], perhaps even a creation of Satan to encourage humans to embrace idleness and indulgence[172] - have since been idiotically decimated. They had varying relationships to the domestication of plants and varying social relations and hierarchies - notably, again, their relationships to domestication and subsistence were not directly deterministic of their social structures.[173] Of course, some of these practices are decidedly non-anarchist and offer us little but warnings, but others are, in my opinion, worth experimentation. In any case, anything like these lifeways *or* the ones Tucker espouses are simply not possible without regenerating the land, which is why I think such regeneration, as I expressed to Tucker, is an extremely worthy part of anarchist praxis.

But with his frozen vision of the world, Tucker seems unable to fully acknowledge the implications of ecocide, that the world has changed profoundly and is changing still. Not only is the biosphere insufficiently rich in most places to support foraging, but even the native plants he fetishizes are changing their habitats. Again, where I live, maple and oak trees are both highly viable sources of food - but they are both likely to become less and less so as climate change permanently changes this ecosystem. Conversely, wild boar - that is, "invasives" in Tucker's and the popular terminology - are slowly moving toward this ecosystem and may enter it in the coming years. I see no good reason to participate in the civilized madness of trying to extirpate such a species, one which is obviously able to survive because it has found a niche made vacant by anthropogenic ecocide - why not feed on them, instead? What is more, why refrain from - of course always judiciously and carefully - introducing plants who may fill an important niche and engage in mutualistic relationships with the humans and nonhumans around them, doing our part to keep the world a little more alive and vibrant during this dark period of catastrophe and death? Of course, Tucker is correct to highlight that native creatures who do not require high levels, or even any level, of human inputs to survive are especially important for regenerating gradually-unmanaged landbases and becoming autonomous coparticipants in the creation of habitats, but it is a distraction to fetishize the native/invasive binary in such a ruptured and recombining world.

Tucker has aligned himself with cultural materialism and criticized my praxis on the grounds that even the attenuated and, for lack of a better term, *feral* practice of forest gardening in the best circumstances would inevitably lead to hierarchy, as horticultural societies have previously had. I reject strict cultural materialism, partially because its reductionism, as I have mentioned a few times now, does

not seem to bear out in the ways Tucker thinks it does. For example, both the Iroquois and the Mohicans were planters of corn pre-contact, but they had radically different social structures and relationships with the corn - notably, the Mohicans were practicing a much more unmanaged form of planting.[174] And, as we saw above, even immediate-return gatherer-hunters are not necessarily without hierarchy.

But even setting all that aside, Tucker himself is not applying cultural materialism to his own proposed praxis - he seems to think that zealous conviction alone can take us directly into a foraging lifeway in spite of the prohibitive material circumstances surrounding us. Moreover, he himself acknowledges that ideas, transmitted cross-generationally, and not just material conditions are major determinants of lived sociality, as when he highlights the culture of anti-hierarchical mockery among the Ju/'hoansi. Is this not a developed social culture of ideas acting alongside and in reciprocity with their ecological conditions? We saw at the beginning of this essay that it may have been reification that preceded and was causal in the change in human subsistence from foraging to agriculture and animal husbandry, rather than the inverse that the cultural materialist analysis would suggest.

My suggestion is that an anti-civilization analysis, while well-served through inferences from anthropology, is made stronger by rejecting this AP-specific interpretation that immediate-return foraging necessarily implies anarchy and anarchy necessarily implies immediate-return foraging. It is dubious from the anthropological record, seems utterly impracticable as praxis, and leads to a confused denial of our present conditions. Of course our origins are relevant to our present situation, both in terms of understanding the emergence and maintenance of civilization and how we might live without it; but, as others have noted[175], there is a limit to their relevance when we recognize that, even in the event of a tremendous recession of authoritarian structures

due to a more optimistic collapse scenario, post-civilization would be something very different from pre-civilization. The biosphere has changed, and even a newly-verdant world would not be the old world - it would have different ecosystems with different opportunities and challenges. An analysis that ignores this empirical reality can only lead to, at best, a delusional and unsuccessful practice.

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The question of the role of violence in anarchist praxis is a seemingly perennial discussion, one that has been with anarchism since its earliest days and is often characterized by intramilieu or intermilieux hostility.[176] When I have participated in these discussions[177], I have found myself occupying what is seemingly one of the most unpopular positions of all, that of rejecting the moral or political objections to the use of violence as well as very seriously doubting the possibilities of the positive outcomes expressed by most of the insurrectionary or revolutionary tendencies calling for and practicing its use.[178] With the recent emergence of anti-civilization individuals and cadres self-identifying with the heading *eco-extremism* employing terroristic violence, these debates have been reignited in anarchist milieux.

On the question of violence, the APs have been inconsistent, vague, and confused. At times they endorse it in some of the most extreme forms possible, and at other times they condemn very similar acts. We have, of course, yet another Motte-and-Bailey, but here it occurs not because of *criticism* of the APs, but instead seemingly for the purpose of public relations and the result of personal cognitive dissonance.

Both Tucker and Zerzan have unequivocally and repeatedly condemned eco-extremism[179] in the strongest terms, even associating it with fascism (without either an explanation or a definition of fascism, as is typical in such

denunciations) and wishing death on its practitioners. Their primary critique is the eco-extremists' self-labeled practice of *indiscriminate attack* - that is, the use of explosives and other deadly forms of attack that endanger not only their targets (typically technologists) but also potentially endanger bystanders or others morally perceived by some as *innocents*. Less obviously but nonetheless clearly upsetting to the APs is the eco-extremist rhetoric, which - certainly in sharp contradistinction to the APs - often features braggadocious and inflammatory language that denounces nearly all humans as complicit in civilization and therefore viable targets for death or injury; jeers at the idea of the imagined everyperson's supposed innocence; mocks anarchists and other radicals who condemn eco-extremism or refuse participation in similar actions; and ridicules the notion of hoping for any real change in the status quo through human efforts, allowing for the possibility of ending civilization only through catastrophic natural and nonhuman forces and specifically identifying their own violent actions as being done for personal satisfaction and instinctual desire. Zerzan is occasionally personally mocked in these communiqués.[180]

This AP condemnation is not only directed at the eco-extremists themselves, but anyone who espouses anything that looks remotely like sympathy for or even mere interest in them. In a bizarre but sadly unsurprising move, Zerzan has even suggested that I am somehow quasi-fascist myself because I participated marginally in the creation and hyping of a book on eco-extremism, in spite of the fact that, in the very same podcast he references as evidence, I said I considered the eco-extremists not to be anarchists and not to share my vision of liberation.[181] It would seem that the eco-extremist actions are so heinous, that everyone not unequivocally and repeatedly condemning their actions in the strongest terms is to be condemned themselves.

But Zerzan was singing quite a different tune in

1995, when he wrote "Whose Unabomber?". Though he assiduously criticized the Unabomber's method of attack as "too random", he followed by denouncing numerous radicals who had distanced themselves from the Unabomber, naming names and accusing them of being cowards and politically correct. He concluded:
"The concept of justice should not be overlooked in considering the Unabomber phenomenon. In fact, except for his targets, when have the many little Eichmanns who are preparing the Brave New World ever been called to account? Where is any elemental personal responsibility when the planners of our daily and global death march act with complete impunity? [...] Is it unethical to try to stop those whose contributions are bringing an unprecedented assault on life? Or is it unethical to just accept our passive roles in the current zeitgeist of postmodern cynicism and know-nothingism?"[182]

After showing some ambivalence about the methodology, Zerzan here applauds violence for the purpose of what he sees as righteous vengeance, not terribly unlike what the eco-extremists say today. Two years later, Zerzan was even more unequivocal in his support of the Unabomber. In "He Means It - Do You?", Zerzan makes no partial criticism of tactics whatsoever, exhorting anarchists to either side with the Unabomber or reveal themselves as frauds and poseurs:
"Enter the Unabomber and a new line is being drawn. This time the bohemian schiz-fluxers, Green yuppies, hobbyist anarcho-journalists, condescending organizers of the poor, hip nihilo-aesthetes and all the other 'anarchists'[183] *who thought their pretentious pastimes would go on unchallenged indefinitely - well, it's time to pick which side you're on. It may be that here also is a Rubicon from which there will be no turning back."*[184]

Yet Zerzan has found it quite easy to turn back and to

act as though he never said these things. As before, Zerzan's language is not unlike that of the contemporary eco-extremists who similarly challenge and mock anarchists who critique modernity and civilization but do not either violently attack its technologists or at least vocally support those who do. Of course, one may change one's analysis for any number of reasons - but Zerzan has neither acknowledged having done so nor explained why. When asked point-blank about this seeming discrepancy between his past and recent comments by yours truly, Zerzan more or less dodged the question.[185]

In a similar vein of endorsing violence as a tactic, Tucker has called multiple times for sabotage of the American electrical grid with the aim of bringing on or accelerating the collapse of the U.S. state via the paralysis of production and commerce and the presumably ensuing generalized rioting: *"Looking at the likeliness of collapse and how this beast will fall [...] an insurrectionary current could be working to hasten that collapse. The most obvious way would be to attack the technological infrastructure [...] It is possible that if power was [sic] knocked out for at least two weeks in this nation[,] civilization would be gone for good here. Civilization lacks the ability to bring itself back up to speed without using the same level of technology that it currently uses [...] if power is wiped out in every major city and there is [sic] no other real options, what are the chances that it could be brought back on [...] This has made the power grid a target for revolutionaries [...] If there was [sic] a large enough effort, continued attacks would essential [sic] decapitate the technological system."*

Recalling the orgiastic looting and rioting that occurred during the blackout of New York City in 1977, Tucker envisions a similar occurrence with this blackout by sabotage: *"[...] the looting and street parties that transcended racial and sex lines as those who had nothing else to loose [sic] broke free during a period of anonymity [...] Imagine global blackout."*[186]

Shortly before Tucker's hyper-self-publicized temporary semi-retirement from social media in 2015, he reiterated his feelings that whatever suffering and calamity might ensue from such a scenario, he found it decidedly preferable to the continuation of civilization. He also wrote in 2005 that he had "no real sympathy" for Kaczynski's victims.[187]

In 2014, Tucker published and championed the novella *Liminal*, which features a green anarchist protagonist who, after agonizing over the decision, kills herself in a suicide bombing of infrastructure in coordination with an international cadre performing presumably similar actions in order to bring about the sudden worldwide collapse of civilization. Zerzan plugged the novella on *Anarchy Radio*.

Moreover, both Zerzan and Tucker have regularly championed a generalized flavor of the American insurrectionary/revolutionary anarchist[188] praxis of anarchists finding points of social tension, inserting themselves into them, and attempting to intensify and multiply social ruptures. The APs have expressed support for such efforts repeatedly in their media.[189] Here, roughly speaking, the assertion is that anarchists must increase an overall tendency toward the ungovernability of a critical mass of the population, and, though admittedly a minority, anarchists can act meaningfully in these moments by speaking and living their critiques, encouraging resistance to recuperation, accentuating social and class tensions, and demonstrating anarchist alternatives to the present system. Articulated in some places more clearly than others, success for these anarchists would look like making ungovernable areas and segments of the population so large, frequent, and resilient as to bring about the collapse of the State.[190]

Zerzan and Tucker's routine and unqualified lambasting of eco-extremism becomes incoherent and contradictory when juxtaposed with their previous calls for the

violent overthrow of society, some endorsements of the latter of which are so recent that they have been concurrent with their criticisms of the former.

In the case of cheering for the Unabomber, Zerzan's recent censuring is plainly in contradiction with his past remarks - eco-extremism is both ideologically and praxeologically descended from the Unabomber.[191] Zerzan himself, in slagging them, has even said, "The ITS group [an eco-extremist group] is real [sic] slavish to Ted Kaczynski"[192] with no acknowledgement or self-criticism of his own previous challenge of "it's time to pick which side you're on". Practicing a similar tactic with similar targets, the only obvious difference between the two is the eco-extremists' tone regarding the indiscriminate nature of their attack and their pessimism regarding the viability and desirability of revolution. Is Zerzan so bothered by mere rhetorical tone? Does his analysis of praxis hinge on an affect of hope? How would Zerzan feel if the eco-extremists did all of the same actions but expressed sorrow over the possibility of harming non-targets and said they were trying to start a revolution against civilization?

Regarding either an attack on the grid, a scenario like that of *Liminal*, or an insurrectionary effort toward widespread ungovernability, there are similar endorsements of what is effectively indiscriminate violence. In almost any imaginable outcome of any of the three strategies that even approached success, there would be enormous death and injury through the initial widespread rebellious violence; the inevitable massive counter-insurgent violence through state forces, paramilitary groups, and reactionary vigilantes; and/or the abrupt breakdown of civilized food and medical systems. If the recent Ferguson uprising is any indication, with its eliciting the quick deployment of the National Guard and arrival of the Oath Keepers, a more successful and widespread series of uprisings/breakdowns would most likely elicit a stronger, faster, and more violent reaction from the various anti-an-

archist interests. The scale of pain and death would quickly dwarf that caused thus far by the actions of eco-extremists.

Are the APs really so able to delude themselves as to pretend that such anarchist dreams of the violent and sudden overthrow of society as we know it would not necessitate killing, or at least indirectly bringing about the deaths of, a very great many people that many anarchists like to sentimentalize as innocent victims of the politicians, the capitalist elites, and their various armed minions? Yes, many people dislike many things about society, and, yes, we can say to some heavily-qualified extent that many people on some more or less latent level want something more like what anarchists envision - but just how far can we take the old Situationist slogan that *our ideas are already in everyone's heads*? Many people might enjoy days of orgiastic looting, lawlessness, and the cessation of work; but how far would they take things?

How many people really want a world without many of the commodities and technologies to which they are accustomed? It seems to me, sadly, that even many anarchists want a world with air conditioning, cars, modern medicine, and the Internet. What would most people do in a widespread insurrection when it looked like the electricity might go out permanently, or when food became scarce, or when they were threatened by agents of the State? What about the many people who would immediately panic at the first sign of real and lasting disorder? And what about members of the Patriot Movement who are just aching for an opportunity to cleanse their homeland by purging it of the likes of us? It seems that indiscriminate violence - including in the indirect form of taking down infrastructure against the wishes of huge swaths of the population - would be the order of the day in such a scenario, were it to even remotely achieve the desired effect.

I am quite confident that where I live, in a tiny rural town in the hills outside of Albany, New York that, were a massive insurrection to succeed in liberating Albany and

were victorious insurrectionaries to start addressing the problem of food security by sending emissaries into the surrounding countryside, many of my neighbors would quite readily equip themselves with their many guns and begin firing on whom they would perceive as, and be told by Breitbart media and the like to perceive as, insane and murderous anarchists and terrorists. These people are not demons or neo-fascist militia members, but they are assuredly people who, however much they might dislike aspects of society, would be horrified and revolted by the idea of the total annihilation of commodity culture, much less civilization. They are people whose dreams of liberation probably involve having more and nicer commodities for less work and the absence of a feeling of economic precarity. They are people who would undoubtedly much prefer to see the odd mail-bomb kill or maim a stranger somewhere than to see a coterie of Anarcho-Primitivists inspired by Kevin Tucker systematically take down the national electrical grid. As they were fired upon by such people, the insurrectionaries would then have to make a choice, as they would repeatedly have to make many such similar choices, about whether to use violence against such supposed innocents to defend themselves and/or continue their insurrection.

In light of such sober assessments, what does it mean for Zerzan and Tucker to endorse violence on the one hand and condemn it on the other? An unflinching analysis that endorses change through violence would recognize that enormous numbers of people would have to die for them to even have *a chance of* seeing the world they would like - yet they have blanched when eco-extremists said that they did not care that they unintentionally injured a mail carrier who was delivering a package bomb to an intended target.[193] Since they have never addressed these contradictions, I of course can only make inferences about the APs, which necessarily involve speculation as to their conscious or uncon-

scious reasons. My suspicion is that their reasons are threefold and uniformly ill-conceived and highly moralistic.

Firstly, I suspect they are so deeply bothered by the eco-extremists' self-described pessimism about their actions bringing about radical change in comparison to Kaczynski's call for a total revolution that they are willing to excuse the latter as righteous violence - we are here in that dicey world of moral justification based on *good intentions*. How would an AP respond to the Trolley Problem?

Secondly, I suspect, like many anarchists - at least whom I have spoken to, I will not generalize beyond that - that Zerzan and Tucker have not really weighed the scenarios they imagine against their own obviously deeply felt and frequently flaunted - but not especially well-examined - moral codes. Clean hands allow for loud mouths: they celebrate every sign of insurrection and dream of a moment of totalizing and righteous violent absolution, but their dreams never feature their personally harming Scared Jane Everyperson the Soccer Mom who digs the dusty gun out of her closet and walks into the street wielding it because a bunch of scary anarchists are excitedly burning down her kids' school. They balk at characterizations of anti-civilization anarchism by figures like Chomsky (who, to be sure, usually argues with canned, bad faith dismissals), who note that their praxis would seem to require the deaths of enormous numbers of people to implement, but I have never seen such balking involve actually working through these contradictions in a serious way. They balked again when I pointed out these same contradictions on a podcast,[194] but Zerzan's reply was to dismiss me as an eco-fascist[?] sympathizer rather than address the critique in a substantive way.[195]

There is a tacit admittance here that the APs are not really comfortable with their own tactical rhetoric and do not know what they want – insofar as they *actually succeeded* in what they said they want, it seems they would not be okay with it. It is difficult to see where such an analysis leads ex-

cept to a kind of comfortable loser's posture of ressentiment, a feeling of lonely righteousness bolstered by denouncing both civilization and its either insufficient or excessive critics.

Thirdly, I believe Zerzan and Tucker still long for a much wider popularization of their ideas and fear that the boastfully callous tone of the eco-extremists, accompanied by actions that have a different ideologization in a post-9/11 world than they did in Kaczynski's time, will alienate an envisioned mass who might otherwise be swayed to AP as worsening conditions increasingly vindicate their critique. Zerzan has come very close to saying as much on *Anarchy Radio*, though of course not in these stark terms. Their feeling is at least *prima facie* at odds with recent history, since the murderous violence of Kaczynski did a great deal more than anarchist media to bring anti-technology ideas into the zeitgeist[196] and made Zerzan probably far more famous than he otherwise would be simply because of his relationship with Kaczynski.



AP is thus still paradoxically and only semi-consciously an ideology of the mass, with the ghost of politics about it. Zerzan, asked about his participation in technologically-based media, replies:

"[...] I have friends that completely refuse to have anything to do with media - pretty much any media. But we're trying to start a dialogue, we're trying to have more communication, and if you are too pure to talk to people, what's the point? That goes under the heading of 'practical needs of the anarcho-primitivist movement'. We have a chance to discuss things and spread different perspectives that maybe people haven't heard of, haven't thought about. [emphasis added]"[197]

I participate in media as well - not nearly as much as Zerzan has, and never in the mainstream channels he has,

but I have done my share over the past few years. My intentions with media, however, have been dramatically different. Through both form and content, I have, from the start, almost totally restricted myself to talking to and with anarchists and other radicals, with the purpose of clarifying and sharpening my and others' analysis and finding cohorts for projects. But Zerzan is interested in persuading a mass audience to join "the anarcho-primitivist movement[?]" and asserts at least here that any praxis eschewing such an approach is pointless puritanism.

Accordingly, Zerzan often does interviews with mainstream news sources, such as *The Atlantic*, *Vice*, *The Guardian*[198], or *60 Minutes*. Several times, he has functioned as a sort of unappointed public relations figure to explain anarchist actions, like rioting in black bloc.[199] When I asked him in person how he felt about the recuperative potential of reducing AP to just another clickbait oddity or the likelihood of willful cheapening or misrepresentation on the part of the media, I was shocked to hear him reply that he thought that such malfeasance was unlikely, that the mainstream media do not have an anti-anarchist agenda.

Similarly, Zerzan has for years celebrated nearly any instance of anything resembling an AP ethos in the mainstream media - of late, this has included the blockbuster films *Her* and *Transcendence* as well as the television program *Live Free or Die*. He has even suggested that such programs are better critiques of society than what most anarchists articulate, a sentiment difficult to take seriously except as an expression of hyper-optimism wedded to bitterness toward pro-civilization anarchist tendencies.

It is difficult to understand this aim of popularization in the praxis of Zerzan, an exponent of a tiny-minority-within-a-tiny-minority analysis, except as another expression of Humanistic residues. A bit of unflinching induction throws cold water on the idea of popularizing AP, suggesting instead

that a meaningful praxis would best take place at the cohort level that the analysis already identifies as in accordance with human nature. The historical record of mass uprisings against enslavement shows that they are predominantly motivated by an easily massified desire for a mere amelioration of the conditions of enslavement, and that they are only sometimes partially successful in achieving these goals. Yet, when asked by the hosts of the *Which Side* podcast what APs should be doing, Zerzan's romantic partner, Alice Parman, answered that they should be trying to mainstream AP ideas - Zerzan said nothing, voicing no disagreement.[200] Is this what Zerzan actually believes, or is it an affect he wants to project?

In the past few years, obviously irked by the worn-on-the-sleeve revolutionary pessimism of perceived rivals, Zerzan has adopted a stance of self-conscious hope, even naming his most recent book accordingly. With his use of the term "hope", Zerzan plays another AP rhetorical game of dualism and equivocation.

First, he constructs a caricatured opposite to his *hope* that is a passionless capitulation at the possibility of any meaningful anarchist form-of-life, a total surrender that sneers at any suggestion of action (it is worth noting that I am aware of no one in the anarchist milieu who lives this way or recommends it, including Zerzan's usual targets). Next, he equivocates between two valences of the term *hope*: the first meaning hoping and/or pursuing the total overthrow of civilization (presumably in some form such as those above, but usually this is unstated or understated), and the second meaning that an anarchist form of life in spite of grim worldly circumstances is meaningful and desirable - he slips subtly between these two valences, treating them as equivalent when they are not. Finally, he juxtaposes his slippery hope against his caricatured despair, vindicating the former as obviously superior - by rejecting total despair, one embraces hope as the possibility of living a meaning-

ful anarchist form of life and as the total-but-undescribed overthrow of civilization. Thus, through a (possibly unconscious) semantic trick, the only meaningful praxis is that aimed at a totalistic transformation, a politics of the mass.



The AP analysis thus offers a praxis of muddied confusion, like all slave ideologies. Beginning from self-alienation, it projects a reification of a harmonious and unsullied nature/wildness with which prelapsarian humans lived in accordance, then demands that we recreate that, ignoring the realities of the nonhuman past, cherry-picking and ignoring evidence, and proposing a hopelessly impracticable procedure. Caught in the quagmire of revolutionary residues wedded to a vague Humanist morality, the APs see their goals as unrealizable without a catastrophe of blood and fire, yet denounce those who actually kill.

Such a praxis summarized, demonstrating the crucial role of *hope* at each step:

1. Adopt and learn subsistence techniques from people from an entirely different bioregion that are supposedly-but-not-actually intrinsically tied to a desired morality. Hope that the morality emerges from practicing the techniques.

2. Encourage violence against the status quo in an abstract sense, or occasionally with specific plans. Denounce those who explicitly embrace actually-directly-harmful violence. Hope that civilization is destroyed, either with or without anarchist violence.

3. Suddenly try to actually live through subsistence strategies from tropical bioregions wherever you actually happen to live. Hope that you survive.

Part III:

An Anticipation of Critique

Since I started engaging in anarchist media a few years ago, I have had quite a few exchanges with the APs, during some of which I voiced some of the above critiques in earlier, less refined forms. Unfortunately, too much of this exchange has occurred over that ugly normalcy of the Internet, which, aside from its deleterious effects on one's health, has, as a friend recently put it, a tendency to make everyone communicating over it more stupid and mean than they usually are.[201] My generous take on the APs' replies to my critiques blames the following on that medium.

Much of it has the feel of playground antics - insults and bluster. Tucker, in particular, seems to suffer from a sincere and profound inability to understand that *ad hominems* and Appeals to Ridicule are not actually valid and sound ways of refuting an opponent's argument. When I submitted an earlier, much shorter version of this essay to *Black and Green Review*, Tucker, after rejecting it, repeatedly asserted without encouragement his intent to reply to the piece in writing. He never did. The closest he has come to replying to any of these critiques was in an exchange with me in a now-defunct public internet forum, in which he unexpectedly replied to a critique I made of the AP use of domestication similar to that above. He frothed:

"Domestication is a fully accepted and understandable concept and reality. You can do something with it. Because Bellamy thinks I'm invoking religion for saying domestication is a bad thing is symptomatic of his own delusions, not mine. That he calls me a Platoist [sic] for believing the world exists in its own right is equally just laughable. I don't find this worth engaging and wonder why this kind of discussion needs to be had at all. It's back pedaling for pontificating and we need to call it what it is, a dead end, and split paths further or get

on with it. For Bellamy, nothing is what it is. It's all obscure philosophical jargon. Can't ever be what it is and it's all some insidious master plan or some shit [sic]. I don't have time for that nonsense and I just don't put any thought into it. For everyone who wants to know what I think, let me put it bluntly, Bellamy is the last fucking person on earth to be qualified to attempt to reiterate any of it. He has zero understanding of it. I've done a lot of writing and I am certainly not stopping, if you want to know what I think, read that, or just ask me. His long cut Cliff Notes interpretations aren't helping discussion, they're just his method for self-indulgent narcissism."

This combination of insults, unexplained characterizations of a criticism as ridiculous, and evasion of the primary issue - in this case, by equivocating between the AP use of domestication and a narrow, biological definition of the term - is typical of Tucker's defenses of his position, as is his strangely hyper-personal animus toward his critics. In a recent e-mail exchange with former *Dispossess* podcast host Osmia, Tucker labeled me "a piece of shit" and "fucking stupid", adding, to clear up any ambiguity, "I do hate [Bellamy], no secrets there."

To be clear, Tucker and I are barely acquaintances - we have met twice, briefly - the above, seemingly hyper-personal anger is inspired simply by *my public criticisms of his writing*. Such a close identification with one's ideas, as though they were immutably part of one's fixed identity, is, to me, yet another telltale sign of ideology: one's ideas cannot change, one *is* one's ideas, and thus an attack on one's ideas is a personal attack. And while most post-pubescents I know do not consider vitriolic outbursts like the two above to be great argumentation, he posted this exchange with Osmia on his public blog, in which he also references the forum exchange with me positively, and then posted the blog entry to the website anarchistnews.org, giving every

sign of his viewing it as a great defense of his positions that he wants as many people as possible to read!

In the same vein, Tucker writes on his blog - in a series of performative contradictions, given the content of the blog entry - "I see no point in engaging [with critics]", "I'm not really sure I care enough to even dig into [why AP is being criticized by them]", and boasts "I haven't bothered to listen to [a critique of AP on a podcast]". Like his insults, Tucker apparently views this muscular posturing at aloofness as a virtue, as though willed ignorance were aspirational.

It is perhaps a testament to his success in this venture that in the same blog post he writes, "[Egoist anarchist Max] Stirner, who spent the entirety of his 50 years in the academy, was a reactionary lunatic. Reading any section of the actual book makes that pretty plainly obvious, which is probably why Stirner's defenders are more likely to paraphrase or extrapolate from him than to quote him."[202]

There is something perversely impressive about writing so self-assuredly while being wrong at least five different ways in two sentences - one almost has to stand back in awe at the level of self-delusion, wondering whether it makes for a wonderfully care-free life. Tucker is wrong firstly about Stirner's life (he was never "in the academy" except as a student), wrong secondly about Stirner's politics (he hung out and debated with the leftists and liberals, including Friedrich Engels - though, to be fair to Tucker, he may just not know what the word "reactionary" means), wrong thirdly about anarchists who draw on Stirner[203], and wrong logically *twice* - first by criticizing Stirner's *critique* on the basis of how he lived his life, which is a *tu quoque*, a fallacy[204], and secondly by implicitly criticizing people who draw on Stirner for the way he (in Tucker's imagination) lived his life, a fallacy of guilt by association. Tucker could have spent maybe ninety seconds on Wikipedia to avoid at least two of those errors, but I guess he could not be both-

ered on that front, either. As if to prove himself incorrigible, Tucker did not correct these simple factual errors even after commenters on his online post pointed them out - why pare down his multi-fronted stream of disinformation?

Perhaps the above tangent into discussing Stirner reads as a *non sequitur* - but it is highly relevant to past exchanges I have had with the APs. Until recently, in both my writing and podcast projects, I identified myself with the egoist/individualist anarchist tendency because I was very influenced by Max Stirner's books *The Unique and Its Property* and *Stirner's Critics*. In particular, Stirner's critique of reification struck me as profoundly important to the anti-civilization analysis; I felt someone had finally put in words a critique I had been latently mulling over for years without knowing quite how to articulate it.

When I started citing Stirner and applying his ideas in my own ways in my media projects, or even just in conversations with friends, it quickly became clear to me that my particular analysis was importantly different from the ways that some egoist anarchists applied his ideas. People frequently told me *That's not egoism* or *If you were an egoist, you would do/believe X*. Since I thought my reading was valid, I kept using the term, anyway, which lead to quite a lot of tiresome arguments of fighting for the definitions of "egoist" and "egoism". Recently, I decided that the terms were more trouble than they were worth because I would often have to spend nearly as much effort distancing myself from the preconceptions people have attached to the terms as I would actually saying what I wanted to say - so I have ditched the terms. Perhaps readers familiar with my other media projects noticed that, up until just now, this entire essay had been devoid of the terms "egoist" and "egoism" as well as references to Stirner, even though my core analysis has remained.

I bring all of this up, including Tucker's hamfisted attempt at critiquing Stirner above, because nearly all of

the APs' critique of me and defense against my criticisms has been directed at me as an egoist and at egoism generally. They attack the category rather than what I specifically say. Probably they will or would have attempt(ed) to defend themselves against this essay in precisely the same way. The criticisms are all quite similar, almost canned - nearly all of it is a variation on this form, established by Zerzan: *"There are egoists who seem mainly in love with their sacred Egos, where all is judged insofar as it serves the Self. Meanwhile, the reigning techno-culture feeds solipsism, narcissism, and isolation the more techno-addicted are its subjects. Did Max Stirner see the natural world as having value only in relation to one's ego? How much interest does the pure egoist have in mutual aid, social struggles[,] or the disappearance of community?"*[205]

Very similarly, Tucker regularly refers to his essay "Egocide" as his final word on egoism, wherein he critiques egoism for its endorsement of a "self/Other split" and basing itself on "that isolation, that Neverland of Self [...] The initial lie of the domesticators"

The accusations here are two-fold: first, that Stirner's ideas imply a deep narcissism, seeing value only in one's self as the word is traditionally understood; second, that egoism is thus a pseudo-liberatory theory, as it actually endorses something like the dominant ethos.

As I said to John Zerzan three years ago, in my only appearance on his own radio show, and as I have said numerous times both before and since then, his argument here is an example of the Straw Man Fallacy, in which one mischaracterizes an opponent's theory as something more foolish and facile than it really is, refutes that distorted thesis, and then subsequently claims to have refuted the actual thesis.

What Zerzan and Tucker characterize above is

something like the ideas of Ayn Rand, who imagined the self as a more-or-less enclosed, fixed, hermetically sealed thing that acted as a free-willed, hyper-rational agent, one whom she encouraged to always pursue an enlightened selfishness and expect the same of others. For Rand, the world was a kind of Spencerian struggle for survival into which the individual was thrown, equipped with reason as its weapon - but the struggle was tempered by a morality that condemned the use of force, narrowly defined, against one another.

For the Stirnerian critic, both Rand's ideology and the APs' imagined version of egoism are based on a reification - that of a fixed Self - around which is built a slave morality. Like most ideologues, Rand begins with a first distinction based on self-alienation - she separates the creature from its habitat, separates some of the flowing relations of actually-lived experience and freezes them into objects that are then imagined to be isolated, self-enclosed, and *causa sui*.

Egoism is not synonymous with such narcissism – indeed, the two are antithetical. *Narcissism is best understood as the reification of oneself, or, more technically, the reification of the subjectivity of one's perception.* This ugly and lunatic hypostatization denies the ceaseless material and sensual interchange among beings and between the organic and inorganic.

Stirner is unequivocal about this when he says, *"I do not presuppose myself, because I am every moment just positing or creating myself, and am I only by being not presupposed but posited, and, again, posited only in the moment when I posit myself; that is, I am creator and creature in one."*[206]

And therefore he does not start from the place of a reified Self, but instead from pre-conceptual phenomenality, that raw experience that is neither objective nor subjective, but

instead "the Flesh of the world". Stirner frequently references *der Einzige*, unfortunately translated by Byington in some places as "the Ego", when it is better translated as the Unique, the singularity, or the one. But what Stirner means, again, is not the fixed Self, but instead the ineffable character of actually-lived phenomenality, "the creative nothing": one is both *no-thing*, not a thing-in-itself, not isolated from the world; and *a creator*, a participator in the world, one who creates the world in each moment of activity; one is "creator and creature in one", a "creative nothing".

Because this ineffable character of pre-conceptual life is impossible to capture in any one word, Stirner stressed that when he referred to *der Einzige*, "*What Stirner says is a word, a thought, a concept; what he means is neither a word, nor a thought, nor a concept. What he says is not the meaning, and what he means cannot be said.*"[207]

The Classical Greek myth of Narcissus, the term's namesake, illustrates the point perfectly. Narcissus, divinely punished for his hubris, becomes obsessed with his reflection, that is, *not himself as an actually-living, embodied being, but instead a self-alienated idea of himself.* He places greater importance on this hypostatization than he does on his genuine life - his body, his web of relations, the richness of varied experiences - and this act brings about his suffering and untimely death.

As for the second part of the AP criticism - the idea that egoist anarchism is actually a manifestation of the dominant ethos, which is supposedly individualism - the critique falls apart completely without the premise that egoism is based on a reified self. But even if you pretend that that is not the case, it is a quite silly argument, so much so that it is difficult to believe that the APs even take it seriously. Does any anarchist - or anyone capable of much critical thought at all - really believe that modern capitalist life under the authority of our democratic republic is all about individu-

als having their desires satisfied? Only someone who takes seriously the democracy ideology that we are all free and expressing our wills through voting, the consumerist ideology that fulfillment of desire is found through commodities, or the idea that atomization is the realization of individualism - in other words, an incredibly naive person - could actually advance this argument in good faith.

Their own arguments contradict their claims here. Zerzan has aligned himself for the entirety of his writing with Freud's observation that civilization can only realize itself through *the constant suppression of desire.* Tucker's analysis of human domestication is based on the idea that innate human desires are constantly being redirected toward artificial, ultimately hollow, replacements. Both APs also talk frequently about the abundance of depression, loneliness, anxiety disorders, suicides, homicides - these cannot possibly be claimed to be individuals pursuing their desires.

The division of labor, as both Tucker and Zerzan correctly critique, leaves individuals deskilled, understimulated, and frequently unable to care for themselves in the most basic ways, such as securing food and shelter - they are thus forced into highly regulated forms of slave labor that usually depend on showing up at specific places at appointed times and performing highly choreographed actions with many other people. Such forced cooperation occurs not only in a single workplace, but across whole networks of workplaces that are in turn coordinated with one another. The atomization caused by the division of labor is not *individualism* - it is forced, mutually alienated cooperation. Do the APs really need this anarchy 101 explained to them, or are they just playing dumb for the sake of making a cheap shot that some people might take seriously?

Just recently, Tucker fulminates:

"The individualist has already won its crusade. If it was [sic] liberating, then Americans would be liberated. They've just

been given the technological tools to seek gratification for their egos in a more immediate and detrimental manner. So why would the egoist oppose? Because that's a false liberation? What's truly their self-interest? Maybe it is staring at a screen all day and popping pills. Who is the egoist to argue that?"[208]

This one is even worse - Tucker's leftist roots are showing. The assertion that our crisis is due to the American ethos being distinctively "individualist" - what, rather than collectivist? - has the character of a Michael Moore-watching liberal, whining that our problems are caused by greedy CEOs and self-indulgent consumers. It is a few steps removed from chanting *People Not Profits!* Anyone with a halfway-polished critique knows that American Rugged Individualism™ started off as an ideology for a bunch of elites to engineer a schism from another bunch of elites and put a nice mask on their slave-based plunder and genocide of a continent. Now, it is a mask for preserving the empty pseudo-fulfillment of consumerism, atomization, and wage slavery. It is a thing politicians say for the empty-headed minority of Americans who get tearful when someone sings the National Anthem. One would hope that someone with Tucker's critical capacity would not field such a canard. But he does. He just doesn't get it - or he tries to avoid doing so, so that he can make silly arguments.

Perhaps the only rejoinder from Tucker that does not involve either streams of insults or canned jabs at egoism is his complaint that I mischaracterize his position. Specifically, insofar as I understand his grievance, he has complained that I disingenuously critique his use of domestication by misrepresenting his writing through a large number of short, decontextualized quotations, making it seem as

though he is more prone to slipping among different meanings incoherently than he really is. Taking his defense in good faith, I pored through his book, his journals, as well as online essays of his that I could find to seek out where he gives his longest, most thorough definition of domestication. I quote it at full length here:

> *"Domestication can mean a number of things. In terms of plants, it refers to intentional breeding for what we consider 'desired' traits until the initial genetic structure of that plant has changed. The same applies among domesticated animals; their wild ancestors were brought into captivity and selectively bred. The real level of genetic change is questionable, but the underlying goal is this: what is bred is what the domesticators' [sic] desire and that the plant or animal becomes dependent upon the domesticator to exist.*
> *Domestication is, at its root, about the creation and maintenance of a synthetic order. It is about control. It reduces the fullness of the world into categories and systems of needs and resources. It turns wild communities into a sum of all parts rather than a single interconnected community."*

After a segue in which Tucker notes that, by his construal, humans can be and have been domesticated as well, he continues:

> *"In terms of humans, domestication is the civilizing process. It is about turning wild humans into something for civilized use. It turns individuals into farmers, peasants, workers, bosses, police, and soldiers just as it turns forests and wetlands into gardens and gardens into fields surrounding cities and fields into deserts."*[209]

By my analysis, his long definition here accords perfectly with the taxonomy of valences I gave above in my

critique. Tucker's first paragraph refers to human agricultural and animal husbandry practices, which I have acknowledged as very relevant to a radical analysis and critiqued in this version of the essay, in the older version of this essay, on both of my podcast projects, and in my interactions with Tucker. His second paragraph touches on the metaphysical aspects I refer to in this essay and in the older version of this essay. His third paragraph analyzes what I would call human subjectivation or discipline, which is certainly relevant to our crisis, but something that is, I think, quite importantly different, something that is obscured and confused by engaging in the reductive AP analysis and calling it "domestication" - again, I have mentioned as much in this essay, in the older version of this essay, and in other exchanges with Tucker. I thus find Tucker's complaint that I misleadingly quote him to be baseless - his longer definition, quoted here, has precisely the same dimensions I have addressed elsewhere through numerous short quotations.



There is one final AP criticism of me worth addressing here: their caricature of me as a hyper-rational philosophiliac who is too caught up in a civilized mindset to understand their spiritual perspective, a spiritual link to the Earth that is the true anti-civilization ethos. Whereas they can hear wildness cry out for healing, I am just a nerd with my head in a book, and so on and so forth...

In spite of Tucker's many hostile portrayals of me, I am not an arch-rationalist - as I briefly touched on above, I view the notion that humans are capable of fundamentally understanding the world through reason as a Humanist delusion. The most ancient philosophical problems have never been satisfactorily resolved, probably because they are irresolvable - doubt and skepticism trump proof time and

again. Rationalism is popularly portrayed as being opposed to religion and spirituality, but Rationalism's true bedrock is a secularized form of faith. I am faithless.

"Spirituality" is a word I avoid like the plague. It is for me one of those hideous words that clothes the utterer in an armor of slime that invisibly keeps oozing outward the more they speak, until the room is filled and everyone else's throats are so clogged that there is nothing they can say - they just have to nod quietly. Or maybe I am unusual for feeling this way. In any case, the radicals who are talking about spirituality and wanting to hold these discussions at anarchist gatherings are of course getting at *something* - they are right to note that something is deeply missing *qualitatively* from our lives, that passing through life in boredom, loneliness, terror, and drudgery, surrounded by commodities and strangers is no way to live well. They are right to say that life seems like it could be so much more, something unspeakably richer. But "spirituality" is a word that is a bit rich for my blood - there is far too much baggage there, it is far too much of a vague predicate. Moreover, the very few attempts I have made at participating in or even listening to anarchist attempts at spirituality discussions have quickly inspired nausea and an urge for flight - they feel almost pornographic to me.

If "spirituality" means finding the simultaneous and incredible diversity and unity of life, the simultaneous interconnectedness and independence of creatures, and the ceaseless flux between the organic and the inorganic in ecosystems breathtakingly and unspeakably beautiful; if it means feeling transported by and intimate with nonhuman creatures, feeling communion with them to be a richness that is being depleted by their ongoing destruction; and if it means rejecting materialism, religion, or any other totalizing metaphysical narrative that claims to explain the world completely and instead accepting that the world is full of

mysteries that are at once delightful and sublime; then I have had "spiritual" experiences and would like to have far more of them - in fact, I would like my life to be absolutely filled with them.

But if "spirituality" means, as it usually does, believing in ontological dualism, a separation between a physical world and a spiritual one, the latter replete with spirits; or if it means believing in moral dualism, with a *natural* world that tends always toward the Good, with humans given the choice to be protagonists or antagonists; or if it means having faith and an implied code of sacred cleanliness, then I am "spiritually" dead and would very much like to remain so. In short, if the "spirituality" of green radicals is (consciously or not) coded language for importing post-monotheistic beliefs under the guise of a new pantheism or animism, then it looks like just another dead end to me. The fact that Zerzan has praised both AP spiritualism and Christian Anarcho-Primitivism is at least *prima facie* disconcerting. God is dead, but the APs have deified the weeds growing from his corpse and called it "spirituality". No thanks, guys - I killed my soul about ten years ago, and the fucker never grew back.

Postscript:
Cynical Virtues - A Preliminary Sketch of an Anarchist Form of Life in Leviathan's 21st Century

Where are we left, then? Eschewing all ideology, wielding an exsanguinating skepticism - can such an analysis be more than unimpeachable theoretical hygiene? Can it manifest as a form of life? If the anarchist can be something more than an especially feisty member of the slave herd, then I think it must be possible - and, in any case, I think it is worth a shot, since we all die in the end, anyway, but we live now in timeless moments when we affirm our lives by taking them back.

So, I invite readers to explore with me the possibility of an anti-civilization anarchist form of life that is neither ideological, messianic, revolutionary, nor catastrophist. I am certainly not the first to make such an exploration, and so I am venturing out from the wonderful sketches others have given us, trying to thank them by sketching perhaps a bit further and in my own way. This brief postscript does not flesh out a detailed praxis, and I do not intend it to do so. My hope is merely that others will find something of themselves in the figure I sketch and ask themselves what that means.

I would like to take up, with the seriousness that only play can bring, what others have offered: Bob Black speaks of a Type 3 anarchism, quipping that he is an "anarcho-cynicalist", which struck me anew recently. In a similar vein, Alejandro de Acosta challenges us to answer, "Could anarchists (really) be Cynics? [...] Are there anarchists who experience their lives as the ultimate criterion, instead of some goal or cause?". Finally, Peter Lamborn Wilson offers a profound disillusionment without despair - "The New Nihilism", and offers what prospects he sees for meaningful life therein, including "Reversionism". Wandering off from where they point, I add to their offerings what the virtues

might be of the cynical anarchist:

Setting Your Affair on Nothing

"My trust in nothing now is placed [...] So in the world true joy I taste"

Goethe

What can it really mean to start from nothing? What does it mean to be "not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but the creative nothing"? I began this essay by attempting to describe two different ways of seeing the world, of being a creature in the world. They are as different from one another as it is possible to be, and, as we choose them in each moment, it is meaningful to speak of them as chosen over a lifetime.

The anarcho-cynic *must* begin her life - lived consciously as a game, a project, a wager, an intention - with no preconceptions, no reifications. We must make a complete break with Absolutes and transcendental signifiers of meaning in all of their various guises, including, as I hope to have clearly shown above, their many anarchist guises.

The world is not a thing outside of us, a thing that makes demands of us or looks after us. Neither is the world a puzzle box to be solved nor a problem to be rectified. There is no overall goodness or badness to the world, nor a tendency toward either of them over time, because there is no overall anything - which would necessarily covertly implies a deity's perspective - to the world. Nearly everyone believes one or more of these things, but not the godless cynic.

The cynical gaze sees a world of blind and directionless becoming-and-passing-away, just as the cynic himself, "Having once come into life[,...is] drifted away to annihilation".[210] The cynic knows that value is *only and precisely* that which he makes by himself and with other creatures, the meaning is in his moments, the world is the coparticipatory *flesh* of perception, and "Beyond this limit [...] all is smoke,

vapor, *typhos*."[211]

For many, such a stance implies an end, that of resignation. For the anarcho-cynic, however, it is a beginning, the necessary basis from which the anarchist life begins. Hence, the title and aim of this piece - the cultivation of a *corrosive consciousness*: an orientation that, in each lived moment, dissolves reification, an anarchist form of life as a way of unmaking civilization within yourself and your relations.

Dionysian Pessimism

> *"If we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence."*
>
> Friedrich Nietzsche
> *The Gay Science*

The anarcho-cynic sees death on the horizon, finding it perhaps a bit funny and absurd - but says yes, resoundingly, to life. The cynical anarchist sees the prison of Leviathan all around, with no sure exit from it but that very same death - but says yes, resoundingly, to anarchy.

When Nietzsche wrote of his *Dionysian Pessimism* as a lived orientation, he was writing to us. He imagined the completion of a kind of dialectic of human consciousness, though without the teleological baggage of Hegel, that "badly informed theologia[n] who like[d] to play philosopher"[212], or his descendants like Marx.

In Nietzsche's account, we went from being wild creatures who, with an animal or child-like guiltlessness, acted out our desires as we pleased, only to be tremendously hemmed in by civilized life, "the diseased softening and moralization by virtue of which the creature 'man' finally learns to be ashamed of all of his instincts [...] that most fundamental of all changes he ever experienced [...] I do not believe there has ever been such a feeling of misery on earth [...]" [213]

From there, a second major transformation occurred as *goodness* went from being associated with personal power, nobility, and happiness in ancient and classical civilization to its inverse with the success of the monotheistic religions: meekness, mildness, weakness, poverty, and asceticism as the good; and evil as pride, power, indulgence, selfishness, and pleasure. Both the ancient/classical and monotheistic value systems, Nietzsche recognized, depended on belief in Absolutes, which he predicted would eventually become unbelievable, resulting in the oft-quoted-and-misunderstood *death of god* and an accompanying collapse into a passive nihilism of resignation, spiritual exhaustion, and a devaluation of all life. For many, as we have seen, if there is no Absolute, there is no value at all.

For Nietzsche, the overcoming of the human is another step beyond, in the moment one goes both beyond good and evil *and* beyond passive nihilism in order to self-consciously become a value-creator, one who affirms life shorn of all illusions and thus redeems it. The flesh of the world says yes to itself in the one who has overcome the human.

In one sense, this is a partial return to the animal state, as the human is once again not ashamed of her instincts, powers, and desires. But she is also changed, having gained subtlety and cleverness, an "intellectual conscience"[214]. She understands her place as a creature in the flux of becoming-and-passing-away with a chance to seize the world and affirm it, and that nothing and no one else can do this for her.

Our Dionysian anarchist is a *kind* of pessimist, to be sure. She looks unflinchingly at the sorry lot of human history and sees that there is nothing there that can bring redemption. Save for a handful of inspiring figures scattered across time and space, whom perhaps she sees as kin, she sees for the most part the miserable march of masters and slaves sublimating their desires into work, religion, and

commodities and periodically reorganizing the details of the arrangement.

In the nonhuman world, she sees bodies and consciousness dance in and out of shapes, one erupting into the other through consumption - but, again, there is no purpose to be found in a higher order or greater good. The endless eating, birthing, shitting, dying, and fucking exists *because* it replicates itself, not because it is *for* something outside itself. What is outside life is indifferent to it. Indeed, in the ease and presence exhibited by these nonhuman kin, the anarcho-Dionysian is assured that the meaning is simply to *sense.*

For the Dionysian anarchist, there is no redemption in the world, and there does not need to be. She has already said *yes* to it.

And so when the choirs of greyfaced miserablists come around to say that there can be no happiness in this fallen world, that they feel daily the pain of a dying world, or that none are free until we are all free, our smiling pessimist asks why, after millennia of misery, would someone want to add more to it? They do not love the world like she does.

Leaving behind The Human Project

> *"If the ancients by injuring a single hair could have rendered a service to the world, they would not have done it; and if the universe had been offered to a single person, he would not have accepted it.*
> *As nobody would damage even a hair, and nobody would do a favour to the world, the world was in a perfect state."*
>
> Yang Zhu
> "Self-Sacrifice and Self-Aggrandizement"[215]

> *"Do you think you can take over the universe and improve it?*
> *I do not believe it can be done."*
>
> Lao Tsu[216]

The miserablists see the smiling Dionysian and denounce: *Hmf, maybe you have a nice life, but what about everyone else? Don't you feel any responsibility to make things better?* Our pessimist expects to be misunderstood when he replies, *Maybe a slave would feel that way.* That is what they expected, *Just what a cynic would say,* they frown.

The pessimistic anarchist welcomes every sign of rupture, insurrection, and breakdown - the mere cessation of slave routines is something to celebrate in itself, regardless of where it goes. The human world becomes a bit less banal. One does not need to be a revolutionary to find joy in looting and fire, where for a moment commodities are inferior to creatures, or be pleased by episodes of mass disobedience and disruption of production. There are opportunities for a kind of passionate play here that is otherwise hard to find, and it is always gratifying to see creatures love and respect themselves by refusing slavery.

And so when insurrectionaries or revolutionaries strive to extend, intensify, and make more frequent these ruptures, there is a sense in which the anarcho-pessimist's heart is with them. At times, when she has the opportunity and is in a certain mood, she joins them, uniform and all. Why not? But those times, doused as they may be in a liberatory joy, are always without illusions.

He knows when he is in the riot that he is not among "comrades" - or, rather, he is the one who is no comrade. He is among *the mass*, and humans committed to mass - committed to strangers and spectres - seek above all else to reorganize themselves and redistribute commodities, work, and social roles among themselves. Wishing for an exodus, the pessimist has found a highly aggressive and insistent form of petitioning, an effort at civilization reform: a reshuffling of roles and representations, a Leviathan metamorphosing to accommodate its body to a new tension. He

knows that when a rupture seems to be winning by broadening and popularizing, it is already being contained - it has become another iteration in *The Human Project*.

Revolutions and uprisings are not breaks from civilization, they are the whorls and ripples in an overriding current, its pressure releases. Aldous Huxley described the normal cycle of human activity as consisting of long periods of routine punctuated by short periods of orgy, hence the regulated and mandated intoxicated sex parties of his fictional dystopia. When uprisings have succeeded in making civilizations fall, they have been one factor among many, and the falls, at least so far, have been preludes to rebirths.

For an ostensibly liberatory *Human Project*, one that says none are free until we are all free and that we must struggle together until we see another world, there is a paradox or an impasse here, an absolutely brutal one. We are imprisoned by the "mutual acquiescence"[217] of one another's slave activity, and so the only apparent way to escape is through a massified change; but, in the moment of mass, we are incontrovertibly back in the reign of phantoms, the reorganization of civilization.

The frowning Humanist can only shake his head at the idea of an exodus from the Leviathanic thoughts and gestures - the real unmaking of civilization through life activity - because it is possible only on the individual and small group level, and even then only partially, intermittently, and with great effort. Such lifeways consign themselves to oblivion so far as mass is concerned, and the Humanist dismisses this praxis as mere dandyism or escapism, since civilization (or more likely Capitalism and the State, for such a critic) remains on the broad scale. Our miserablist is committed to being an actor on the stage of History.

But for the anti-humanist cynic, History is a nightmare from which he has awoken[218]. They reject the self-immiserating slave metric that says we have failed completely

unless we overthrow the totality. The anti-humanist cannot see an end to civilization in *The Human Project* because The Human Project is civilization. Yes, they carefully watch the signs of its crumbling from extrahuman forces and its own internal tensions, searching for new opportunities and dangers; but not with foolish hopes of absolution from without. Our anti-humanist anarchist is not an actor on the stage of History, but a player with the tides.

Defacing the Currency

> *"These were the ponoi, practices Cynics would use to loosen the bonds of custom [...]"*
>
> Alejandro de Acosta

A friendlier critic, one closer to our position, announces, *Aha, I see! You're an ideological individualist: you've lost all interest in reaching other people and just want to abandon the world as much as you can, yeah?*

Not so. The anti-humanist anarchist is not (necessarily) anti-human; he is a creature of his habitat, one that would like to inhabit his habitat more consciously, and that habitat most likely includes humans.

The critic insists, *But didn't you just say you have no interest in finding liberation with other people because you think almost no one will ever be on the same page as you? It sounds like you have no interest in communicating. And why should anyone want to engage with you if you say your values are only your own and no one else's, anyway?*

That our values are our own does not mean that they cannot be suggested or shared, each of us feeling them in their own way. It means that that they are communicated self-critically as the values of sensual, shifting bodies exerting their selves on their habitat, and not as frozen universals imagined to somehow permeate everything. It is a more honest and liberatory form of communication.

Moreover, the Humanists are not entirely wrong when they say that our own liberation is related to the liberation of others - our lives are certainly richer and more beautiful when we are in loving relations with healthy, happy, and fulfilled people, and so helping others to liberate their selves is a kind of self-liberation. What the anti-humanist anarchist rejects is the assertion of *moral responsibility to submit because others are submitting and that liberation lies in piecemeal amelioration of civilization.* When the anti-humanist communicates, it is not in the Humanist propaganda of trying to push a *mass* in a certain direction. It is communication perhaps to find fellows or perhaps to deface the currency - that is, to undermine popularly accepted beliefs, reduce banality, and disrupt routine - but it is always done as a liberatory act *in the moment*, not for a deferred, supposed revolution.

We can draw inspiration from the classical Cynics and their practices: behaving outrageously and strangely in public, expressing contempt for civilized life without self-censorship, and forcing unscripted social interactions. This communication was not a Humanist form of submission in which one disingenuously tries to *meet people where they are at* ("where they are at" is almost inevitably wanting to very mildly alter a particular aspect of civilization), but a form of expression whose liberation was *immanent in the expressive act*. The anarcho-cynic understands that civilization reproduces itself through the most mundane and innocuous relations - even banal conversation is a form of mutual submission. He believes that submission is contagious, and so is liberation.

Reversionism, Re-inhabiting, and the Agricultural Counter-Revolution

> *"Reversionism is my own term for a phenomenon noticed also by certain anarchist anthropologists like J. C. Scott:*

namely, that human societies can revert and actually have reverted to 'earlier' economic/social forms in order to evade the authoritarian state. [...] This 'escapism', it seems to me, constitutes the very gist of luddite practice. It demonstrates the truth that humans can 'turn back the clock' and rebel against Progress and oppression [...]"

Peter Lamborn Wilson
Anarchist Ephemera

"It is very easy to advocate changing the world. Talk is cheap. It is not easy to change your own small corner of it."

Bob Black
"Theses on Anarchism after Post-Modernism"

If civilization is a way of life characterized, at least in part, by destroying ecosystems, my suggestion is that anti-civilization anarchism is a form of life characterized, at least in part, by recreating ecosystems. Of course, even a parking lot is a sort of ecosystem - one of a very shitty sort. But the anti-civilization anarchist wants to be like the other animals they see and use their powers to make their world more lovely, to *inhabit* their world.

Our anarchist is cynical enough to know that the herds of slaves, the devastated landscape, and the mass dispossession he has experienced at the hands of the State will necessitate compromises, some of them perhaps awful. Depending on the very institutions that one despises cripples both the character of life and any real possibility of surviving without civilization. Thus, an orientation of *reversionism* is in order.

Taking up Wilson's *reversionism*, we have a praxis of gradually reducing dependence on the State and economy for survival. It may look and begin a thousand different ways to a thousand different people depending on their opportunities, capacities, and interests. But the anarcho-

cynical orientation is always present - taking back one's life - and a general vision is clear: the recreation of human and nonhuman habitat.

Radicals tend to be drawn to cities, probably out of loneliness as much as anything else. But cities have always been and are increasingly an architecture of calculated control: soil is entombed, movement is channelled, senses are assaulted, surveillance is ubiquitous. The press of the economy and State is stronger as costs are higher and space for alternatives is restricted. The Humanist anarchist is here because she feels she must be among the people, but the cynic sees even here a kind of learned helplessness. Reversionist anarchists can find one another in these places - or wherever they may be - to pool resources and make plans for an exodus. Yes, Leviathan has polluted and touches everything now, but that does not mean there are not freer places with greater opportunities.

For the anarcho-reversionist, the implications of the techniques of forest gardening, with an anti-civilization orientation, are enormous: the potential for subsistence entirely outside the economy, the *undoing* of the slave ideology movements toward agriculture and industry. Bringing a Luddite approach, this can be done with little or no machinery, reducing or eliminating dependence on civilized fuels initially or over time. One can act as an animal who enriches its habitat for itself and others, planting and tending strategically to create a rich, mutualistic symbiosis of creatures. As it matures, this once-managed landscape becomes increasingly unmanaged, more and more cocreated by the increasing number and diversity of creatures who inhabit it - the ludic vision of playful labor can manifest in the praxis of subsistence through the agricultural counter-revolution.

At the upper ends of success would be an informal network of such projects, with members engaging in mutual aid to create a culture of reversionism, a contagion of

anti-civilization subsistence. Anarchists could *actually begin surviving without civilization* in a serious way, instead of being civilization's malcontent slaves who may resist with their free time but nonetheless usually reproduce civilization nearly every time we eat, drink, and shit.

Taking seriously self-identity as *the creative nothing*, it follows that we are our habitats. Millennia of slavery has created a world of deserts, roads, warehouses, electrical grids, fiber-optic cables, parking lots, department stores, and skyscrapers. It is the landscape from which slavery arises: the centralization of subsistence, defaunation and defoliation, and mass dispossession of human beings of their habitats. As a friend[219] pithily put it, the opposite of civilization, the growth of cities, is arboration, the growth of trees.

1. By "Western Culture", I mean those modern cultures heavily influenced by Classical Greece and Rome and the Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
2. I will explicate the term *self-alienation* further later in this piece, but, for now, suffice it to say I mean the process by which people habitually act against their really-felt desires and project their agency onto abstractions.
3. Civilization is of course partially embodied in material infrastructure, but any given portion of infrastructure is neither necessary nor sufficient for civilization. Rather, civilization is *a way of life, a way of thinking and doing* characterized by the growth of cities – that is, areas sufficiently densely populated by humans so as to exceed the carrying capacity of the landbase and require the importation of food from surrounding rural areas characterized by agriculture and animal husbandry. Civilized life generally includes all of the following, with quantitative and qualitative variation: institutionalized hierarchy (reification of social roles) centralized in a State, through which there is an attempt to legitimate centralized administration of violence and delegitimate non-State actors' use of violence; political representation and bureaucratic administration through State officials; mass dispossession of the majority of the population through enclosure; mass enslavement through self-alienation and dispossession; a division of labor organized through a linear and numerical conception of time; the creation and exchange of commodities; and ideology rationalizing all of the above as well as articulating racial or cultural supremacy, anthropocentrism, and sometimes social and intellectual progress.
4. A disclaimer: People calling themselves Anarcho-Primitivist may not agree with my characterization of their position in this essay - for that reason, let me be clear when I say that all my critique and description is delimited to Zerzan and Tucker. No doubt, some or all of it could apply to many others as well, but I also do not doubt the possibility that none of it might apply, even for some who call themselves AP (I will henceforth use the abbreviation AP to refer to either the noun or adjective indicating the tendency and the abbreviation APs to refer to Zerzan and Tucker together).
   Zerzan and Tucker have been the main popularizers of the tendency in the US and continue to circulate its best-known US journal, *Black and Green Review*. Certainly, I recognize that they do not speak for everyone who identifies with AP. My choice of figures is partially an expediency, as they are the ones who have done the most writing and speaking publicly and are thus the most available for critical examination, and partially personal, as I have engaged in a good deal of debate

with the two. To those who feel they do not at all fit the bill critiqued here but nonetheless identify as AP, I would sincerely ask why not eschew such a baggage-laden term in favor of simply being "anti-civilization"?

5. I will not here examine their lived practice as anarchists outside of media projects, not because I consider this unimportant (indeed, I consider it to be of the highest importance), but because I simply cannot claim to have this level of knowledge about their lives and because in any case it would merely amount to a kind of *tu quoque*. I will, however, critically examine their statements regarding praxis.
6. "Theory". Online Etymology Dictionary. Douglas Harper, 2001 – 2017. http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=theory. Accessed 02/07/2017.
7. I use it here not in the narrow sense that Karl Marx and his intellectual descendants have, but instead in the more expansive and theoretically useful sense derived from Max Stirner and developed by Jason McQuinn thusly, "*Reification is the interactive process through which we can reduce our full experience of recognition in some way in order to make it more abstract or passive, less intense or direct, or interpret it as less real by rationalizing (conceptually fixing or hypostatizing) one or more aspects of the experience [...] On the one side an activity is reduced to a passive object, and on the other side the activity that is removed from the then passively-constructed object onto a symbolic agent. The two great archetypal models for reification in practice are slavery and religion: slaves and spirits.*" Mcquinn, Jason. "Critical Self-Theory & the non-ideological critique of ideology". *Modern Slavery*, Number 3. C.A.L. Press, Spring-Summer 2014, Oakland, CA.
8. This very useful term was coined by Ron Sakolsky, who explores the phenomenon in his excellent *Breaking Loose: Mutual Acquiescence or Mutual Aid?* From LBC Books, Berkeley, CA, 2015.
9. McQuinn, "Critical Self-Theory".
10. Mann, Charles C. "The Birth of Religion". *National Geographic Magazine*, June 2011, http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2011/06/gobekli-tepe/mann-text. Accessed 02/07/2017
11. McQuinn, Jason. "A brief history of theory". *Modern Slavery*, Number 3. C.A.L. Press, Spring-Summer 2017, Oakland, CA.
12. Note that the much-vaunted free will of Mani, Christianity, Immanuel Kant, and others is not what we might call the freedom (a problematic word for many reasons, but a meaningful one) of your and my self-creation in chosen communion with others, the freedom of anarchists – it is the ideologized "free will" that means you and I are to be morally judged and blamed for all of our actions as though

they occurred in a vacuum and not in a relational world and as though we were not enculturated as dispossessed slaves. Its primary use by civilized ideologues has been to publicly and internally shame and punish slaves for their disobedience as well as to shore up human supremacy by creating a metaphysical division between humans and all other creatures and elements of the biosphere.

13. There is a great deal that can be said about these figures that is likely to be of interest to anarchists - I am greatly limiting myself here. In an upcoming, longer piece, I will discuss their relationships to the State and human slavery.
14. I am well-aware that much about Socrates' actual beliefs – including his Humanistic optimism – is debated, not only because of how he is known primarily through his students but also because his supposed statements in those sources are at times cryptic or contradictory. But what is more important for the discussion here is the legacy of how he is usually understood and presented.
15. Such as the Problem of Universals and questions of metaethics, ideas still discussed by the tenured brain-slaves of our academies.
16. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future.* Translated by R. J. Hollingdale, introduction by Michael Tanner. Penguin Books. New York, New York, 2003.
17. There is much to say about the implications of the value systems of the Abrahamic religions for anarchists, but that would take us too far afield for the purposes of this discussion. In an upcoming, longer piece, I will explore a bit about their connections with civilization and slavery more broadly.
18. Exodus 3:14, King James Version
19. "YHWH Meaning", Abarim Publications. http://www.abarim-publications.com/Meaning/YHWH.html#.WMRRIhD89B8. Accessed 03/17/17.
20. I am aware that this change in time-consciousness in the West is a complicated and controversial subject for historians and philosophers. It has been argued by some that the role of Christianity has been exaggerated, and that other factors, such as the emergence of dramatic technological changes within single generations causing individually-observable evidence of material progress, were more significant. For the purposes of this essay, the generally agreed-upon fact that monotheism was an important factor is all that is really relevant.
21. Just to pause for a moment to reflect how insane this slave ideology is when compared with even the ones that came before it - consider how far removed such a relationship of the human, the creative deity or deities, and the world is from, say, an Aztec or Olympian religion in which

the world is a chaotic place and humans are the playthings of gods who are, variously, cold, sadistic, spiteful, mocking, vain, jealous, lustful, and whimsical. The Florentine Codex describes an Aztec deity thusly, "Our Lord [...] is made to laugh. He is arbitrary, he is capricious, he mocketh [...] He is placing us in the palm of his hand; he is making us round. We roll; we become as pellets. He is casting us from side to side. We make him laugh; he is making a mockery of us." Quoted in Gray, John. *The Soul of the Marionette: A Short Inquiry into Human Freedom.* Farrar, Straus and Giroux. New York, New York, 2015.

22. A 2014 Pew Research Center poll found 70.6% of Americans self-identified as Christian, while a 2012 poll found that 91%[!?] believed in a "God or Universal Spirit". From Green, Dominic. "Soul Survivor: Metaphysics as Intraphysics in the Age of Re-enchantment", "Reenchantment", *The Hedgehog Review: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Culture*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Fall 2015.
23. I coined this term as I was writing without having heard or read it elsewhere. Unsurprisingly, it has been used elsewhere by several other writers to mean several different things. I do not intend to invoke anything by its use except for the definition that I am giving here.
24. This even occurs among anarchists, as with Rudolf Rocker, approvingly quoted by Chomsky, calling anarchism "[...] a definite trend in the historic development of mankind [!!!...]". Chomsky, Noam. "Notes on Anarchism", *Chomsky on Anarchism*, AK Press, Edinburgh, Oakland, and West Virginia, 2005.
25. Davis, David Brion. *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823.* Cornell University Press. Ithaca, New York, 1975.
26. With almost incredibly bizarre self-transparency, the Third Reich was named after the prophecy of Joachim of Flora's Third Age. Gray, John. *Black Mass: Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia.* Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. New York, New York, 2007.
27. The Neocons were true believers of Francis Fukuyama, who pronounced in 1989 that the collapse of the Soviet Union signified "the end of history" - that is, capitalist democratic republicanism was the final stage of human sociocultural evolution and would inevitably achieve world hegemony. But Fukuyama and the gang were heavily influenced by Alexandre Kojève, who in turn was a student of Hegel! Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" Retrieved from"http://www.wesjones.com/eoh.htm">, 03/19/17.
28. Consider, for instance, some of the latest videos on offer from submedia.tv, with their breezily uncritical use of such Leftist shibboleths as "global revolution" and "internationalism".
29. Both Noam Chomsky, fairly vaguely, and David Graeber, more

specifically, have articulated such visions.

30. For well-articulated criticisms of this pernicious phenomenon, see Gelderloos, Peter. "Lines in Sand", available at theanarchistlibrary.org; Landstreicher, Wolfi. "A Question of Privilege". *Willful Disobedience*, LBC Books, Ardent Press. Berkeley, California, 2009; and Dragonowl, Lupus. "Against Identity Politics: Spectres, Joylessness, and the Contours of Ressentiment". *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed*, No 76. C.A.L. Press. Berkeley, California.
31. An anecdote of an especially stark example of this dualism: In a conversation I will never forget with three self-described "revolutionary anarchists" - who were for the most part thoughtful people and sincere anarchists whose company I enjoyed - when I questioned how they imagined the continued existence of high technology in their post-revolutionary vision, given the horrible and toxic labor involved in creating, say, a smartphone or a car, one of them breezily replied that they would "obviously force the bourgeoisie to do that kind of work." Rendered literally speechless at this casual endorsement of slavery by an anarchist, I turned to the other two with my mouth hanging open, both of whom cheerfully nodded their agreement.
32. To reiterate, I recognize that my critique may not apply completely, or even at all, to at least some persons who identify with Anarcho-Primitivism - see footnote 4.
33. Note the first point on Tucker's "Anarcho-Primitivist FAQ" (which actually consists of zero frequently asked questions), in which he defends AP against the accusation of being ideological. Tucker's characterization, rather than specific definition, of what constitutes an ideology certainly touches on certain aspects of most ideologies, but it is sufficiently vague as to leave one with the impression that the most important measure one can take against ideology is to avoid excessive specificity and prediction. http://www.blackandgreenpress.org/p/anarcho-primitivism-faq.html
34. Tucker, Kevin. "To Speak of Wildness". *Black and Green Review*, volume 2. Canada, Fall 2015.
35. Strangely, two of Tucker's earlier essays - "Egocide" and "Agents of Change" - explicitly reject holding biocentrism as effectively alienating oneself from the nonhuman world. But at least for the past three years, Tucker has pulled an about-face and unambiguously rejects anarchist analyses that are not biocentric. At the time of writing this piece, I have no knowledge of how or why he made this change and could not find any mention of it in his writing. In any case, I find even his past rejection of biocentrism untenable and incoherent in light of his other statements regarding *wildness*, as will become obvious in this piece.

36. To be clear, this gloss is no caricature, the APs are *avowedly* dualistic. In both his writings and on *Anarchy Radio*, his weekly radio show and podcast, Zerzan has repeatedly condemned radicals who reject such a foundational dualism as pusillanimous, ahistorical, evasive, and - his favorite epithet, which he uses as a wastebin taxon for positions he does not like - "postmodern". Similarly, in a bit of unsolicited personal correspondence in response to my old podcast, *Free Radical Radio*, Tucker made it clear that due to my unequivocal rejection of a dualistic metaphysic, I was beyond the pale: "[...] you're no green anarchist," he wrote, and insisted that I stop calling myself one. The quoted terms above appear repeatedly in: Tucker, Kevin. *For Wildness and Anarchy*. FC Press, Milwaukee, WI and *Black and Green Review*, Greensburg, PA, 2010.
37. In a June 25, 2014 article with *Vice* by Roc Morin entitled "The Anarcho-Primitivist Who Wants Us All to Give Up Technology", Zerzan tells the interviewer, "I remember being in Turkey giving a talk and this young woman said, 'You know, I think this green anarchy movement is at base a spiritual movement.' Wow. Maybe we've been groping towards that all along." He has since made similar statements, such as an enthused endorsements of green anarchist spirituality discussions at anarchist gatherings on his weekly radio show and podcast, *Anarchy Radio*.
38. Tucker, "The Failure of Revolution", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
39. At the Philadelphia Anarchist Bookfair in 2014, where he made the comment about power, Tucker declared with evident pride that the advent of domestication gave anti-civilization/green anarchism "its teeth", that is, its theoretical power.
40. Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, 1982.
41. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field: The Consequences of Domestication", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
42. Also known as the Problem of the Heap, this issue is a definitional problem that emerges when trying to impose categories on phenomena that occur along a spectrum. If you remove sand from a heap grain by grain, when does it stop being a heap?
43. This analysis is necessarily very brief. In an upcoming, longer work, I intend to flesh out this theme more thoroughly.
44. Jacoby, Karl. "Slaves by nature? Domestic animals and human slaves". *Slavery & Abolition*, 15:1, 89-99.
45. Zerzan, John. "Animal Dreams". *Black Seed* issue 1.
46. Morris, Desmond. *The Human Zoo*. Kodansha America, Inc., 1969.

47. Tucker, Kevin. "Flowers for the Individualist: Why Arguing with Egoists is Pointless". *Kevin Tucker: Anarcho-primitivist writer. Re-wilding human.* "https://www.kevintucker.org/single-post/2017/02/09/Flowers-for-the-Individualist-Why-Arguing-with-Egoists-is-Pointless--post/2017/02/09/Flowers-for-the-Individualist-Why-Arguing-with-Egoists-is-Pointless"Accessed 03/20/17.
48. *The Walking Larder: Patterns of Domestication, Pastoralism, and Domestication.* Edited by Juliet Clutton-Brock. Routledge Library Editions: Archaeology, 2015. *Hunter-gatherers: An Interdisciplinary Perspective.* Edited by Catherine Panter-Brick, Robert H. Layton, and Peter Rowley-Conwy. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 2001. Anderson, M. Kat. *Tending the Wild: Native American Knowledge and the Management of California's Natural Resources.* University of California Press. Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, 2005.
49. "Motte and Bailey", RationalWiki, "http://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Motte_and_bailey" accessed 03/11/17.
50. Tucker, "Egocide", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
51. Zerzan, John. "Zoltan vs. Zerzan" Stanford University, Geology Corner Auditorium (320-105), 11/15/14.
52. Tucker, "The Witch and the Wildness", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
53. Tucker, "Agents of Change: Primal War and the Collapse of Global Civilization", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
54. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
55. Tucker, "The Disgust of Daily Life", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
56. Tucker, "The Witch and the Wildness", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
57. Tucker, "Egocide", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
58. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
59. Tucker, "Agents of Change: Primal War and the Collapse of Global Civilization", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
60. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field: The Consequences of Domestication", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
61. Mach, Ernst. *The Science of Mechanics: A Critical and Historical Exposition of Its Principles.* The Open Court Publishing Company. Chicago, 1907.
62. de Acosta, Alejandro, "To Acid-Words", *The Impossible, Patience,* Little Black Cart (Ardent Press), 2014.
63. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field: The Consequences of Domestication", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
64. Tucker, "Unintended Consequences", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
65. Tucker, "Forest Beyond the Field", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
66. Tucker, "Egocide", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*
67. Tucker, "Forest Beyond the Field", *For Wildness and Anarchy.*

68. The absurd notion that human activity could literally eradicate life from the planet crops up occasionally in the more disembrained and moralistic anarchist discussions. Lierre Keith breezily makes a very similar statement in Franklin Lopez's film *END:CIV*, though she gives her statement a pseudo-scientific veneer instead of a spiritual one. These sorts of comments are one of several themes that have left me with the impression that many anarchists, even those flying the green colors, have a very poor understanding of ecology. A number of our fellow creatures are astonishingly resilient, like tardigrades, archaea, and *Deinococcus radiodurans* - these are creatures that can survive nuclear fallout, being frozen or boiled alive, and the vacuum of space. Probably these anarchists, like many environmentalist-types, are too distracted by their spiritual connections with charismatic megafauna to bother learning about such other creatures.
69. Tucker, Kevin. "To Speak of Wildness". *Black and Green Review*, volume 2.
70. Tucker, "Egocide", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
71. ibid.
72. ibid.
73. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
74. Tucker, "Spectacle of the Symbolic", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
75. Tucker, Kevin, "Unintended Consequences", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
76. This phrase is not only featured in the title of Tucker's book; it is also how he signs his personal correspondence.
77. Tucker, Kevin, "To Speak of Wildness"
78. Tucker, Kevin, "Egocide"
79. In fact, he does so in the very same book, such as in the essay "The Creation of Disaster". As with biocentrism, Tucker has never explained this change in terminology and implied perspective. Tucker is at it again: this self-contradiction is another example of the Motte-and-Bailey Fallacy frequently committed by the APs.
80. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field".
81. Tucker, "The Spectacle of the Symbolic"
82. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field"
83. Kevin Tucker, "Agents of Change", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
84. Tucker, Kevin. "To Speak of Wildness". *Black and Green Review*, volume 2. Black and Green Press. Canada, Fall 2015. The following quotes and references for the next eight paragraphs are from this piece, except when otherwise specified.
85. Tucker complains in a blog post of unspecified "egoists" who critique wildness as a stand-in for "God". As is typical of his fashion of dealing

with critics, he quotes no one and references no one when he describes these critiques, then simply asserts that they are obviously wrong. Since almost nothing is presented, almost nothing is analyzed - the reader is left to either accept or reject Tucker's assertion on its face. I am aware of no such critique and have never made one thusly. From Tucker, Kevin. "Flowers for the Individualist: Why Arguing with Egoists is Pointless". *Kevin Tucker: Anarcho-primitivist writer. Re-wilding human.* https://www.kevintucker.org/single-post/2017/02/09/Flowers-for-the-Individualist-Why-Arguing-with-Egoists-is-Pointless" Accessed 03/20/17.

86. By mystic, I mean the loose and general definition: someone who has grasped objective existential truths through personal spiritual experiences leading to a life transformation.
87. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field"
88. Tucker, "Egocide"
89. Tucker, "Unintended Consequences"
90. Zerzan, John. "Animal Dreams", *Why Hope? The Stand Against Civilization*. Feral House. Port Townshend, Washington, 2015.
91. Tucker, "To Speak of Wildness"
92. My essay "To Love the Inhuman", published by Enemy Combatant in the collection *Egoist Ecologies*, is a longer review and response to Zerzan's piece with more examples. Some of that material is reproduced here.
93. Tucker, "Egocide"
94. Distinct from parasites, parasitoids are creatures who similarly exploit a host for food and habitat, but who, unlike parasites, necessarily kill, devour, or sterilize their hosts to complete their lifecycle. They are my favorite counterexample to the moralization of nonhumans, due to the fact that their behavior is often quite horrific from a Christian/Humanist perspective - so much so, in fact, that no less a figure than Charles Darwin was moved to write of them to one of his colleagues: "I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae [parasitoidal wasps] with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars." Darwin, Charles R. Letter to Asa Gray. 05/22/1860.
95. Interestingly, Zerzan brings up the ichneumon, referring to it imprecisely as a fly (ichneumon are Hymenopterans, closely related to other wasps, bees, sawflies, and ants; they are not Dipterans, the true flies), in order to, appropriately, showcase its marvelous senses; he avoids bringing up its reproductive cycle that might turn moralistic

stomachs.

96. Zimmer, Carl. *Parasite Rex*. Atria Books. 2001.
97. Zerzan, "Animal Dreams"
98. Tucker, "The Creation of Disaster", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
99. Zerzan, "Animal Dreams"
100. Tucker, "Agents of Change", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
101. Nietzsche, Friedrich. Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. "On the Prejudices of Philosophers", *Beyond Good and Evil*, Penguin Books, 2003.
102. Perhaps it is this disdain for, in Tucker's words, "philosophical bullshit" that causes him to make basic errors when talking about the history of human thought, such as recently attributing the idea of *tabula rasa*, the empiricist idea that the mind is essentially without knowledge before sensory experience, to "Plato and his predecessors", who, in Tucker's view, are shoring up the civilizing process by presenting humans as though they do not have inherent biological proclivities and faculties and are instead a "blank slate" - "we are not starting from scratch", he protests ("To Speak of Wildness", *Black and Green Review*, volume 2). Plato never wrote about *tabula rasa* (the fact that the phrase is Latin, not Greek, is a bit of a giveaway), nor did he believe in anything remotely like this idea; he claimed exactly the opposite. Plato was a rationalist, not an empiricist - his entire epistemology was based on a supposedly intrinsic spiritual connection from birth with the Forms, things that could not be sensorily experienced. As for "his predecessors", does Kevin mean Socrates, who also did not venture any claim of *tabula rasa*? Or the pre-Socratics, with whom Plato mostly disagreed? It must be one of those rationalists!

    Perhaps Kevin is thinking of 17th-century British philosopher John Locke, with whom the phrase is usually associated. He would probably be surprised to learn that even Locke did not think that the mind was literally without structures and faculties prior to experience, as Tucker is claiming the idea means.

    I dwell on this short aside of his, minor though it may seem, as it is representative of the sloppy thinking and hand-waving dismissals and criticism that characterize much of Tucker's writing. People, ideas, and things he dislikes - in this case, some vague idea of Rationalism epitomized by a philosopher whose name he once heard - are grouped nonsensically together on a basis of misinformation so as to be more easily criticized.
103. Consider Yang Zhu, Lao Tzu, Heraclitus, Protagoras, the Cynics, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Stirner, Jason McQuinn, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, David Hume, David Bohm, Wolfi Landstreicher, David Abram, Bob Black, John Moore, Peter Lamborn Wilson, and Edmund Husserl.

104. Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous*. Random House, Inc., Vintage Books. New York, New York, 1996.
105. Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*.
106. Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*.
107. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*.
108. Zerzan, John. "Agriculture". *Elements of Refusal*. C.A.L. Press/Paleo Editions. Columbia, Missouri, 1999.
109. Tucker, "Case Studies on the Dualistic Nature of the Totality: Technology", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
110. Tucker, "To Speak of Wildness"
111. Catechism of the Catholic Church.
112. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*.
113. This exchange took place on a currently-defunct internet forum called Anti-Civ.org
114. Zerzan, "Animal Dreams"
115. Ely, Craig R. "Extra-Pair Copulation in the Greater White-Fronted Goose". *The Condor* vol. 91, 1989, pp 990-991.
116. Zerzan, "Animal Dreams"
117. Barja, Isabel. "Prey and prey-age preference by the Iberian wolf *Canis lupus signatus* in a multiple-prey ecosystem" *Wildlife Biology*, vol. 15, 2009, pp. 147-154.
118. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field"
119. Mollison, Bill. *Permaculture: A Designer's Manual*. Illustration and layout by Andrew Jeeves, edited by Reny Mia Slay. Tagari Publications. Tyalgum, Australia, 1988.
120. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic*. Translated by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen. Hackett Publishing, Inc. Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1998.
121. Foucault, Michel. Interview, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress."
122. Tucker is as obsessed with sneer quotes, which I consider a hallmark of bad argumentation, as he is *ad hominems*, using them regularly in his attacks on others but also nonsensically in the strangest circumstances. In a recent, especially splenetic response to me, he used them to sneer at an earlier version of this piece, "your 'essay'" (from the now-defunct anti-civ.org forum). Really, Kevin - is it not an essay? However much he dislikes or disagrees, does he really think it is not "A short literary composition on a single subject, usually presenting the personal view of the author"?
On the "Anarcho-Primitivism FAQ", which contains exactly zero frequently asked questions and instead consists of Tucker's rejoinders to common criticisms of AP, Tucker sneers that "All told I have 61 points

so far to 'respond' to [...]" - so he is sneering at the idea of his own responses now? Is he sneering at his own responses because he has only responded to eight of the sixty-one criticisms, even though the website has been up for years? Since the AP FAQ does not actually consist of questions, can we call it the Anarcho-Primitivism "FAQ"? - hey, that *is* fun, after all!

123. This whole series of quotes is from Tucker, Kevin. "Flowers for the Individualist: Why Arguing with Egoists is Pointless"
124. Tucker, "To Speak of Wildness"
125. Achenbach, Alexandra and Susanne Foitzik. "First Evidence for Slave Rebellion: Enslaved Ant Workers Systematically Kill the Brood of Their Social Parasite *Protomognathus americanus*". *Evolution*, March 2009. Franks, Nigel R. "Dominance and reproductive success among slave-making worker ants". *Nature*, vol 304. 08/25/1983. Monnin, Thibaud and Francis L. W. Ratnieks. "Policing in queenless ponerine ants". *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*. January 2001. Pamminger, T., S. Foitzik, D. Metzler, and P. S. Pennings. "Oh sister, where art thou? Spatial population structure and the evolution of an altruistic defence trait. *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*, vol 27. 2014. Tschinkel, W. R. "Ritualized conflict in *Odontomachus brunneus* and the generation of interaction-based task allocation: a new organizational mechanism in ants." *Animal Behavior*, vol. 58. December 1999.
126. Tucker, "Flowers for the Individualist"
127. Tucker, "To Speak of Wildness"
128. Tucker, "Egocide"
129. Whipps, Heather. "Why did people become White?" *Live Science*. http://www.livescience.com/7863-people-white.html
130. "Humans Are Not Herbivores". *The Vegan Biologist*. https://veganbiologist.com/2016/01/04/humans-are-not-herbivores/ Accessed. 01/04/2016.
131. Cochran, Gregory and Henry Harpending. *The 10,000 Year Explosion: How Civilization Accelerated Human Evolution*. Basic Books. New York, New York, 2009.
132. Anthony, P. D. *The Ideology of Work*. Tavistock Publications. London, 1977.
133. Tucker, "Agents of Change"
134. Tucker, "The Spectacle of the Symbolic"
135. Zimmer, *Parasite Rex*
136. Gould, Stephen J. and Richard Lewontin. "The spandrels of San Marco and the Panglossian paradigm: a critique of the adaptationist programme". *Proceedings of the Royal Society-London B.* (205): 581–598. 1979.

137. Tucker, "Forest Beyond the Field"
138. Tucker, "The Creation of Disaster"
139. Zerzan, John. "Future Primitive". *Future Primitive and Other Essays.* Autonomedia and *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed.* Brooklyn, New York and Columbia, Missouri, 1994.
140. Such as "Unintended Consequences", "The Forest Beyond the Field", and "The Spectacle of the Symbolic".
141. Kelly, Robert L. *The Foraging Spectrum: Diversity in Hunter-Gatherer Lifeways.* Smithsonian Institution Press. Washington and London, 1995.
142. Morin, Roc. "The Anarcho-Primitivist Who Wants Us All to Give Up Technology". *Vice.* June 25, 2014. https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/john-zerzan-wants-us-to-give-up-all-of-our-technology. Accessed 03/18/17.
143. Kaczynski, Theodore. "The Truth About Primitive Life". Available at theanarchistlibrary.org. Accessed 03/18/17.
144. Tucker, "Anarcho-Primitivism FAQ"
145. Turnbull, Colin M. *The Forest People.* Simon and Schuster. 1962.
146. Turnbull, Colin M. *Wayward Servants: The Two Worlds of the African Pygmies.* The Natural History Press. Garden City, New York, 1965.
147. Barker, G. *The Agricultural Revolution in Prehistory: Why did foragers become farmers?* Oxford University Press. Oxford, 2006.
148. Finlayson, Bill. "The 'Complex Hunter-gatherer' and the Transition to Farming. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/2024993/The_Complex_Hunter-gatherer_and_the_Transition_to_Farming Accessed 03/16/17.
149. Rowley-Conwy, *Hunter-gatherers: an interdisciplinary perspective.*
150. Kelly, *The Foraging Spectrum*
151. Keeley, L. H. "Protoagricultural practices among hunter-gatherers. A cross-cultural survey." *From Last Hunters, First Farmers.* Edited by T. D. Price and A. B. Gebauer. School of American Research Press. Santa Fe, 1995.
152. Finlayson, "The 'Complex Hunter-gatherer'"
153. Tucker, "Anarcho-Primitivism FAQ"
154. Rowley-Conwy, *Hunter-gatherers: an interdisciplinary perspective.*
155. Kelly, *The Foraging Spectrum.* Rowley-Conwy, *Hunter-gatherers: an interdisciplinary perspective.*
156. Tucker, "To Speak of Wildness"
157. Tucker, "Anarcho-Primitivist FAQ"
158. See, for instance, their interviews on *Free Radical Radio.*
159. E.g., by Chomsky, Andrew Flood, Bookchin
160. Tucker, "Agents of Change"

161. Seaweed. *Land and Freedom: An Open Invitation.* Blackpowder Press. 2013.
162. Such as in his participation on the forums of *The Feralculture Land Liberation Project: Freeing Humans, Life, and Land from the Disaster of Monoculture.* <https://feralculture.com/>
163. Tucker, "Agents of Change"
164. "Invasive" is a fraught term, one that has been weaponized by herbicide-selling corporations like Monsanto to terrify naive would-be do-gooders into buying a lot of poisons and traps in order to annihilate vilified species, usually introduced to new areas by human activity, who are supposedly doing harm to the local ecology. The idea that invasive species actually do real and lasting harm to native species has been seriously challenged as lacking evidence and being marketing propaganda. See Orion, Tao. *Beyond the War on Invasive Species: A Permaculture Approach to Ecosystem Restoration.* Chelsea Green Publishing. White River Junction, Vermont, 2015.
Tucker shows his allegiance to a view of pristine, static ecosystems by using this term. In any case, Tucker's use of it here makes no sense at all, as an invasive species is defined, problematically and typically, as "a plant, fungus, or animal species that is not native to a specific location, and which has a tendency to spread to a degree believed to cause damage to the environment, human economy or human health." ("Invasive Species", *Wikipedia*) As Tucker well knows, almost every commonly-grown vegetable is more likely to have trouble surviving without substantial human aid rather than be likely "to spread to a degree to cause damage to the environment". Maybe Kevin thinks, *If domesticated means bad, and invasive means bad, then domesticated must mean invasive, right?* And he is again engaged in a logical fallacy, that of Affirming the Consequent.
165. Tucker, "Flowers for the Individualist"
166. Ibid.
167. Tucker, "Against Cultivation"
168. Tucker, "Agents of Change"
169. And there are in fact numerous native and semi-wild plants involved in the project I am doing now.
170. Hall, William P. "Is this the start of runaway global warming?" http://www.orgs-evolution-knowledge.net/Index/Essays/ClimateEmergency/Start%20of%20Runaway%20Warming.html 03/13/2017. Accessed 03/14/2017.
171. Jacke, Dave and Eric Toensmeier. *Edible Forest Gardens: Ecological Design and Practice for Temperate Climate Permaculture.* Chelsea Green Publishing. White River Junction, Vermont, 2005.

172. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution.*
173. Lavin, Lucianne. *Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples: What Archaeology, History, and Oral Traditions Teach Us About Their Communities and Culture*. Yale University Press. New Haven and London, 2013.
174. Lavin, *Connecticut's Indigenous Peoples.*
175. See, for example, McQuinn, Jason. "Why I Am Not A Primitivist". Retrieved from *Anarchy: A Journal of Desire Armed* and available at http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/various-authors-a-dialog-on-primitivism" Accessed 03/20/17 and Moore, John. "Interview with John Moore". John Filiss, interviewer. *Anarchist Speculations: writings by John Moore.* LBC Books (Ardent Press). Berkeley, California, 2016. Bob Black has also generally held across his writings that primitive lifeways are valuable to anarchists as inspiration in various particulars rather than wholesale models.
176. Seminatore. "Indiscriminate Anarchists". *Atassa: Readings in Eco-extremism*, #1. LBC Books. Berkeley, California, 2016.
177. Mostly, this has occurred through *The Brilliant* and *Free Radical Radio* podcasts.
178. This brief statement is not at all intended as a substantive analysis of the role of violence in praxis, which is outside the scope of this essay, but merely as a quick summary to reveal in good faith to the reader the perspective I am bringing in what follows.
179. This condemnation can be found repeatedly in *Black and Green Review* from the first issue onward, regularly on *Anarchy Radio*, and on the recent interview with Tucker on the *It's Going Down* podcast.
180. Various authors. "Our response is like an earthquake: It comes sooner or later". http://anarchistnews.org/content/our-response-earthquake-it-comes-sooner-or-later Accessed 03/20/17. They write of Zerzan, "According to Zerzan, we have to have 'hope' that 7 billion people will unite in one accord to dismantle the economic, political, and social system that sustains their existence, and that they will do this more or less peacefully. [...] in pointing out that this is an impossible fairy tale, we are condemned as "nihilists" [...] In the end, Zerzan wants to destroy civilization in the physical realm without destroying the values on which it is based [...] civilized morality is sacrosanct for [APs]."
181. Bang, Aragorn and Bellamy Fitzpatrick. "Episode 41: *Atassa*". Edited by Linn O'Mable. *The Brilliant*. http://thebrilliant.org/podcast/episode-41-atassa/
182. Zerzan, John. "Whose Unabomber?" *Running on Emptiness: The Pathology of Civilization*. Feral House. Los Angeles, California, 2002.
183. Is this where KT learned that sneer quotes are cool?
184. Zerzan, "He Means It - Do You?" *Running on Emptiness.*

185. Fitzpatrick, Bellamy and Rydra Wrong. "Episode 63: Live with John Zerzan: On Transhumanism, Nihilism, and Egoism". *Free Radical Radio*. November 17, 2014. http://freeradicalradio.net/2014/11/17/episode-63-live-with-john-zerzan-on-transhumanism-nihilism-and-egoism-2/ Of course, I did not press the issue - Zerzan and I were still on fairly good terms at that point, and I was not as troubled by his inconsistencies.
186. Tucker, Kevin. "Revolution And/Or Insurrection: Some Thoughts on Tearing this Muthafucka Down" originally in *Species Traitor* #2, available at https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/kevin-tucker-revolution-and-or-insurrection-some-thoughts-on-tearing-this-muthafucka-down Accessed 03/20/17.
187. Tucker, "The Message and the Messenger", *For Wildness and Anarchy*.
188. I am speaking of a tendency whose ideology is articulated by the recent coalition of It's Going Down, CrimethInc., and submedia. I consider this distinct from the insurrectionary tendency espoused and enacted by Alfredo Bonanno and Jean Weir.
189. Tucker has been very critical of revolution in a more classical sense, but he supports decentralized insurrection - *Species Traitor* was billed as an "Insurrectionary Anarcho-Primitivist Journal" and featured articles like the one quoted above. *Anarchy Radio* has for years featured an action news section in which Zerzan has in general supported such efforts, including recently with the post-Trump riots in Portland, OR. Zerzan has answered calls on the show asking what can be done by vaguely supporting generalized rioting. In the pages of *Black and Green Review*, there is a similar ethos expressed, such as the first issue of the journal containing an essay cheering on the Ferguson insurrection (and, on the very next page, an essay condemning eco-extremism).
190. Adherents of this tendency may find my gloss here uncharitable or inaccurate. It may be something of a negative stereotype, though my intention here is not to criticize this tendency per se, only to expose how the AP's vague support of it brings them into a contradiction in their own articulation of viable anarchist praxis. The brief description I give is a loose distillation of the ethos expressed in many conversations I had with anarchists of this broad stripe while living in the Bay Area, the praxis characterizing the periodic protest-cum-riots I participated in during the years I lived in the Bay Area, as well as the overall message on offer in the recent media of It's Going Down, submedia, and CrimethInc., particularly since they started working together more closely. If it is inaccurate in the particular, I maintain it is still accurate in the general, and the nature of such a mass-based praxis is that it will inevitably dilute itself and lose nuance through its generalized manifestation.

191. Of course, Kaczynski and some of his allies have criticized and distanced themselves from eco-extremism, primarily over a strategic disagreement on the viability and desirability of a revolution against techno-industrial society, and some eco-extremists have done the same with Kaczynski. This disagreement does not negate the fact of influence. For more information, see Jacobi, John. "Apostles and Heretics". *Atassa*, #1.
192. Morin, "The Anarcho-Primitivist Who Wants Us All to Give Up Technology", *Vice*
193. This essay was written in March '17, when the eco-extremists' claims of actions were limited to attacks on technologists, before their recent change of claiming attacks and exhorting violence toward everypersons. For a short comment on this change, see my piece "Revolutionary Dissonance: Why Eco-Extremism Matters for Those Who Most Hate It".
194. Episode 41, *The Brilliant*
195. *Anarchy Radio* 02/14/17. Besides featuring the usual strange insults (referring to the book we discuss snidely as a "commodity", even though Zerzan himself has sold his books for years) and mischaracterizations (his claim is that we said eco-extremism is great[?] "because it is nihilism"[?]), notice how Zerzan falls short of following his own analysis to its conclusions. He champions the ALF and ELF for destroying property (which, for the record, I do not consider to be in the same category as social change through indiscriminate violence, so it is a disanalogy to bring that in, as Zerzan must realize) without harming people, therefore preventing the government from being able to denounce them, therefore allowing for...well, what, exactly? He trails off here. Is he wanting to say it garners them popular support of the cause which can lead to a widespread uprising? Then he is right back in the scenario I am describing.
196. Jacobi, "Apostles and Heretics", *Atassa* #1
197. Pavelka, Martin. "Anarcho-Primitivism is Not Just Another Ideology". *More Thought*. 04/24/16. Available at http://johnzerzan.net/articles/pavelka.html
198. Campbell, Duncan. "Anarchy in the USA. *The Guardian*. 04/14/2001. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/apr/18/mayday.features11
199. Oliver, Kevin. "Why protesters were wearing all black, masks at Capitol". KCRA3. 06/27/16. http://www.kcra.com/article/why-protesters-were-wearing-all-black-masks-at-capitol/6429358
200. "Episode 193: John Zerzan & Alice Carnes [sic?]". *Which Side Podcast*. 07/18/2016. <http://whichsidepodcast.com/john-zerzan-alice-carnes/>
201. Apio Ludd shared this observation with me.

202. Tucker, Kevin. "Flowers for the Individualist: Why Arguing with Egoists is Pointless". *Kevin Tucker: Anarcho-primitivist writer. Re-wilding human.* "https://www.kevintucker.org/single-post/2017/02/09/Flowers-for-the-Individualist-Why-Arguing-with-Egoists-is-Pointless" Accessed 03/20/17.
203. Quotes from Stirner are common in the writing of Bonnano, McQuinn, Passamani, Novatore, Wolfi Landstreicher...
204. Tucker knows this is a fallacy - in our only face-to-face conversation of any real length, he complained to me about people dismissing his AP ideas based on how he lives his life.
205. "Why Hope?" It is worth noting that in the next sentence, Zerzan tries to claim, as he has done elsewhere, the Cynics and the Taoists as antecedents of AP. It is a quick, casual, but audacious assertion. I am quite confident that Diogenes or Yang Zhu would laugh off the dualistic, moralistic exhortations of AP as just more claptrap.
206. Stirner, Max. *The Ego And His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority*. Translated by Steven T. Byington. Edited by James J. Martin. Dover Publications, Inc. Mineola, New York, 2005.
207. Stirner, Max. *Stirner's Critics*. Translated by Wolfi Landstreicher. Introduction by Jason McQuinn. LBC Books and CAL Press. Berkeley and Oakland, California, 2012.
208. Tucker, "Flowers for the Individualist"
209. Tucker, "The Forest Beyond the Field"
210. Yang Zhu, *Yang Zhu's Garden of Pleasure*. Anonymous. Kamogawa, Japan, 2015.
211. de Acosta, Alejandro. "Cynical Lessons". *The Anvil Review*. Little Black Cart. Berkeley, California, 2011.
212. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. Regnery Publishing, Inc. Washington DC, 1998.
213. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*.
214. Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. Translation and commentary by Walter Kauffman. Random House, Inc., Vintage Books edition. New York, New York, 1974.
215. Yang Zhu, *Yang Zhu's Garden of Pleasure*.
216. Lao Tsu. *Tao Te Ching*. Translated by Gia-fu Feng and Jane English. Introduction and notes by Jacob Needleman. Random House, Inc., Vintage Books. New York, New York, 1989.
217. Sakolsky, *Breaking Loose*.
218. This is a paraphrase of Joyce.
219. Lone Raven shared this pithy observation with me.

The Ape's Paternoster

by John Moore

During the afternoon in question a great aperture appeared
The lens opened
The door dilated and a magnificent vista emerged
Vast horizons of possibility unfolded
The portal to freedom gaped wide
Revealing communities of free individuals
Engaged in purposeless practice

Possibilities spilled over into our world
Boundaries collapsed
Old certainties tumbled down around us
And in fresh forms insurgent energy stirred anew

The prolemongers whimpered
And coweringly fled to their kennels
To growl at one another and gnaw on their dry bones

The Iron Laws suffered metal fatigue
Snapped
Became encrusted with rust and crumbled into dust

The pumping piston of the dialectical perpetual motion machine
Wore out
And the factory closed down
The historic mission foundered
The long march came to a halt
The Party petered out
Anything can happen chanted the visionary singer
Anything
Anything
Anything can happen
Anything at all

But scarce had the iconoclasts' work commenced
Scarce had projects of human renewal formed

Then a new graven idol was raised up amid the ruins of the fallen false gods
Another other
Another not me not here not now
The Primitive—ideology resurrected
Authority re-vindicated
Identity calcified
The ideology of the Primitive
--the primitivist ideology—
Crystallized, ossified
Fixation on abstraction: a quixotic quest to return to an uncertain origin
Turning away from the aperture the primitivist like Lot's wife looked back
In nostalgia (that most selective mode of memory, that most unreliable mode of knowledge) and turned into a pillar of salt

The day began to wane and in the fading light the new tables of the law were written and the new prison house of ideology built
Credo:
I hold these truths to be self-evident:
All primitives inhabit an earthly paradise
Are innately and uniformly good in their faceless sameness
And hence remain the ultimate source of authenticity
(while I am fallen sinful evil
Redeemable only through universal destruction)
(the doctrine of (mere) nihilism)
And negation based on despair
Vacuity and self-loathing: a horrified recognition of futility leading not to a restoration of primitive lifeways
but to hallucinatory visions

Dusk gathers
Minerva's owl prepares to take flight

No longer able to discern the gaping aperture amid the falling

gloom
The squinting primitivist peers into the wrong end of a telescope
And down the dark lengthening corridor of the night glimpses
the portal to possibility shrinking
Closing
Infinitely distant
Infinitely receding



CORROSIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

By

Bellamy Fitzpatrick

Critique, in my view, is always implicitly complimentary: its mere existence validates the importance of its target, regardless of how harsh it may be... Anarcho-Primitivism drew me to anarchism in a way that the Humanistic Left-wing or Right-wing versions never could have, and so I've lavished it with a good deal of this praise. Barring a sea change in the discourse with the Anarcho-Primitivists, what follows is a sincerely fond farewell.

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